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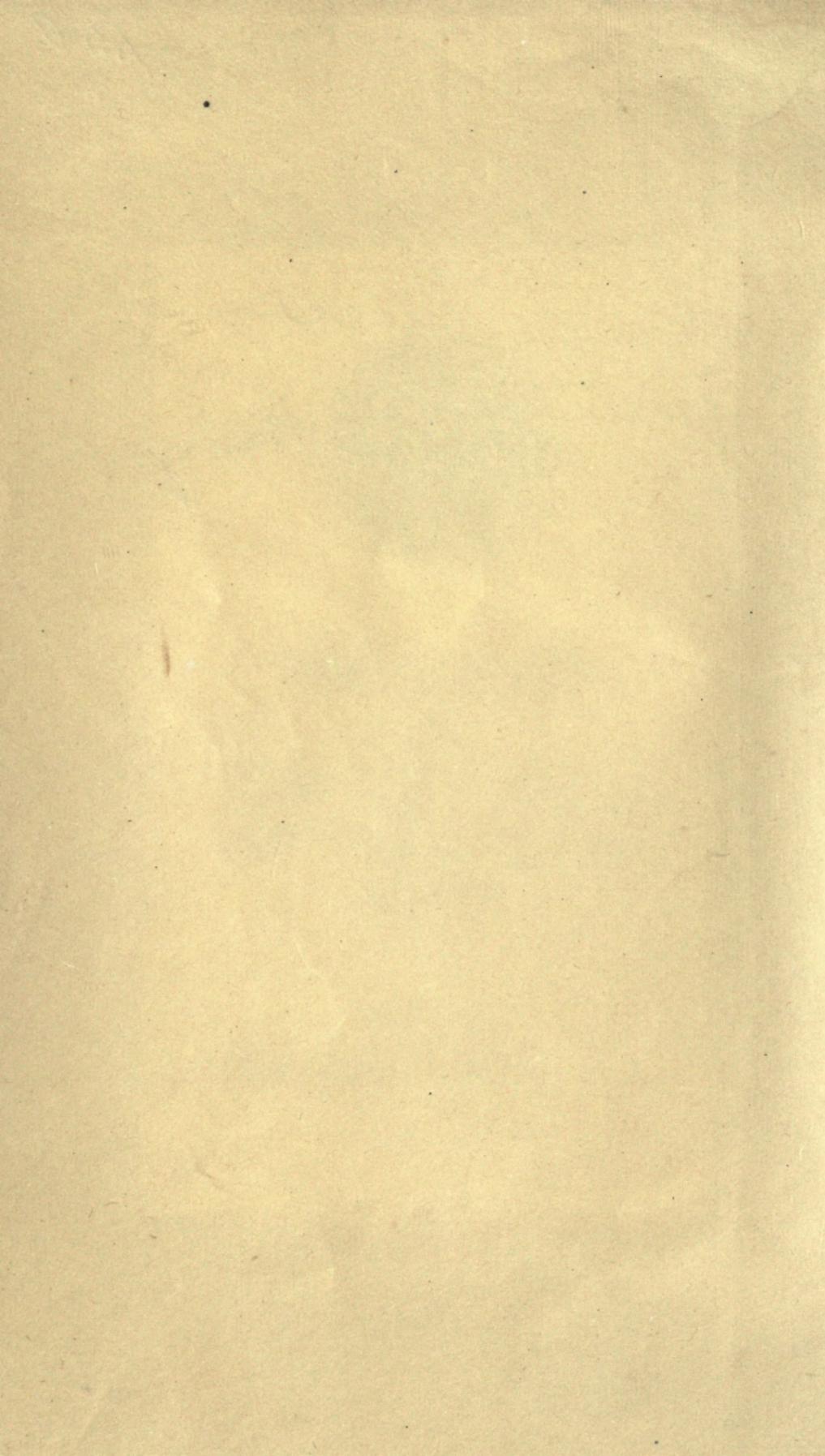


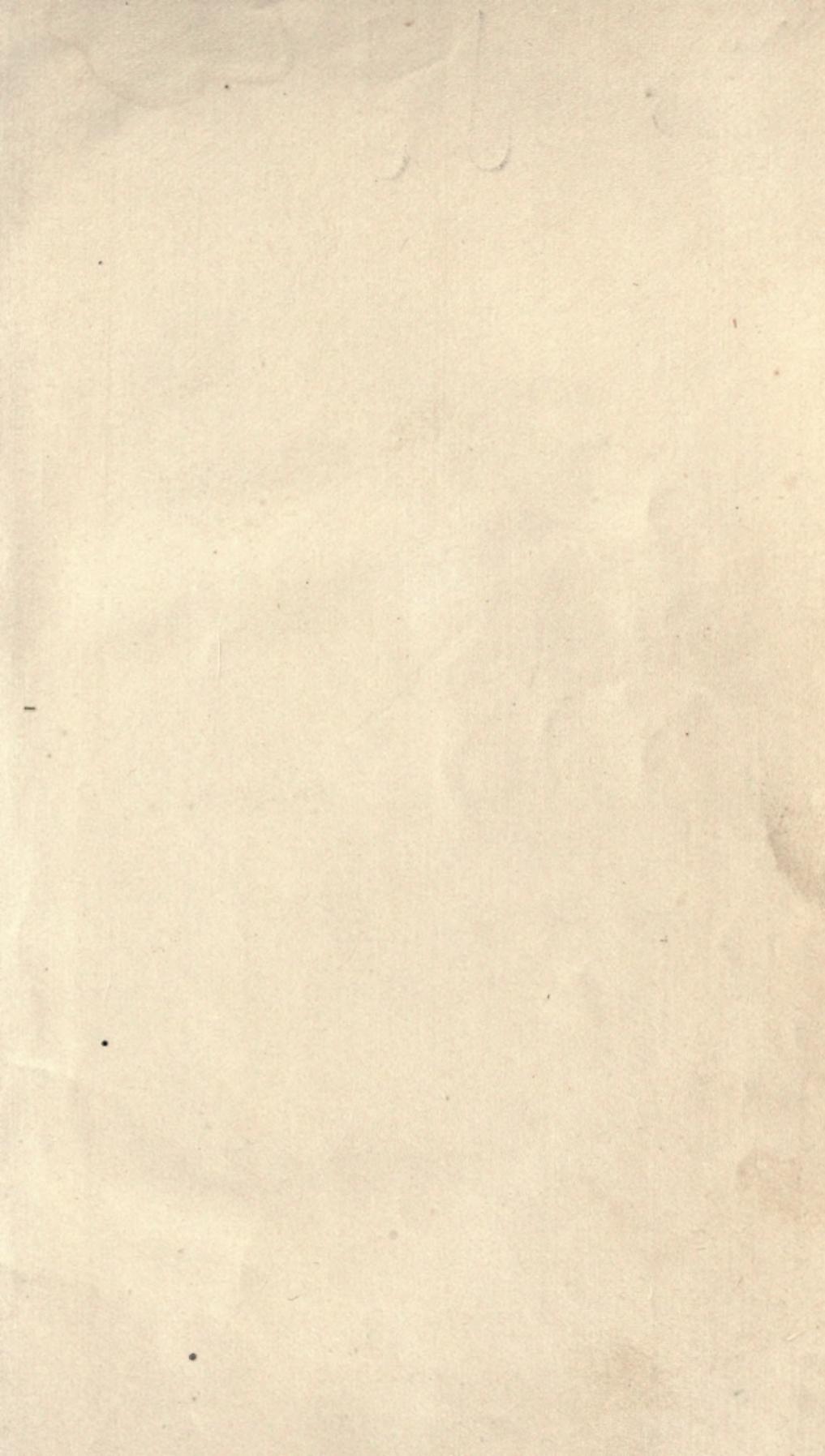
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FROM DAWN TO DARK

IN ITALY.

A TALE OF

The Reformation in the Sixteenth Century.



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P R E F A C E.

THIS historical tale of the Italian Reformation has been prepared with great care from the best authorities on the subject. The writer has endeavoured to present a faithful picture of a period the most eventful in the religious history of Italy, when the little light that had always lingered among the Vaudois in the recesses of the Alps seemed rising and spreading on the horizon toward a perfect day. Many a heart in the crowded cities of the priest-ridden land hailed it with gladness. Cloistered monks, "nuns in their narrow cells," Roman nobles, Florentine citizens, Venetian senators, not a few, opened their souls to its effulgence. It has been painful to write how that glorious light was quenched, gradually, but surely. One by one, Italy's contingent to the noble army of martyrs was dismissed heavenward, amid blood and fire which darkened the land. Ruthless and bloody persecution was followed by a terrible retribution of spiritual death, continuing almost to the present hour.

The names and histories of the men who fought and

fell in this struggle for God's truth should not willingly be let die out of our memories and our grateful love. It has seemed to the writer that Christians know less about these Italian Reformers than about any others. Perhaps the present little work may help to supply a felt deficiency. The accuracy of all its historical and biographical statements, and the truthfulness of the local colouring introduced, may be relied on. It is hoped that the reader's heart may be stirred up to gratitude toward God for his mercy manifested to our own favoured land.

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FROM DAWN TO DARK IN ITALY.

CHAPTER I.

THE DREAM BEFORE AWAKING.

AGLORY of Italian noonday lay upon the little town of Locarno. Surrounding Alpine heights were yet snowy with winter's livery, and the near forests of pine showed grandly gloomy against the distant peaks of piercing whiteness; but Lago Maggiore rippled as blue and calm as in midsummer, reflecting a heaven without a cloud.

The narrow streets of Locarno shut off the sunshine well, except in the broad market-place, where the usual venders of country provisions sat and sold and chattered in the patois of the mountains.

Some absorbing subject interests them to-day. Many glances are directed toward the huge dark monastery which overtops and shadows the other buildings, as the Church in that age towered above

and eclipsed all things secular. A side of the square is filled with the gray massive front and ponderous portals of a convent. Occasionally a dingy lay brother enters or emerges from it, with fifty pair of eager black eyes following his movements, and fifty glib tongues gossiping about him in whispers.

“And how say you?” observed a peasant girl, carrying a fruit-basket, to an aged crone who sold relics and images at a stall in one corner; “are the heretic ladies before his Eminence even now?”

“Even now,” echoed Dame Ursula, crossing herself quickly: “the holy saints defend us from heresy and witchcraft, and all evil! I saw them entering two hours agone. His Eminence condescends to argue with them, hoping to draw them again into the true faith. If they are obstinate, why, the Church has power to punish yet, in spite of Luther and all his fiends.” The old woman pursed her withered lips firmly together, as she replaced on its proper end a leaden Madonna which had rattled down against a bead rosary, and propped it up by a crucifix securely.

“But, Mother Ursula, they would not burn women, would they?” And the dark eyes of the maiden opened widely with a sort of dread.

“No, foolish child, not here—though I’ve heard of it in other places; but the Church has ways of punishing besides that, believe me.” The crone put up her brown bony finger, and nodded mysteriously, as if she knew a great deal, were she only willing to tell. “You have heard of the Holy Office, child?”

Twelve years before, in 1543, Pope Paul the Third had issued his bull founding in Rome the congregation “*Sancti Officii*,” constituting six cardinals inquisitors-general, and endowing them with terrific power for the extirpation of Lutheran opinions. Thenceforward the dawn of divine truth in Italy began to be overcast with the darkness of premature eclipse.

Caterina, the peasant girl, had never heard the tremendous name which was to prove a watchword of terror to the extremest verge of her native soil. Old Mother Ursula knew little more than the name; but drawing on her vivid Southern imagination for her facts, she quickly sketched a few items of horror which blanched her listener’s cheeks and lips.

“The poor ladies! I hope his Eminence will convince them of their errors,” sighed the girl. “It must be a terrible calamity to be a heretic!

Now, what is it that they don't believe, Mother Ursula?"

"Everything," answered the other, oracularly. "They don't believe the very saints are in heaven! Nay, they blaspheme the adorable sacrifice of the mass, affirming that any common piece of bread is as good as the blessed eucharist! Sancta Cecilia pardon me for saying the words!" And she crossed herself vehemently many times, and pattered a few prayers on her bead amulet.

"These very ears," she continued, "heard the physician's wife declare that extreme unction was of no avail to a soul that had lived in sin. When I confessed it to Father Pietro, he said it was rank heresy and an invention of the Lutherans. And as for purgatory, they don't believe in it at all."

Here the relic-seller grasped her companion's wrist as she glanced at two men who passed by the stall.

"There he goes, the Signor di Montaldo, her husband; the best leech in Locarno, and kindest to the poor—more pity that he should be tainted with a heretic wife. And that tall youth beside him is a young doctor fresh from Padua—Signor Francesco, they call him; a most gentle and learned student, who cured my cough with a

draught of simples the other day. He hath a certain look of my son Giovanni, thinkest thou, Caterina? The same firm, burnt cheek, and great eyes, as black and bright as midnight round the stars. But I forget; thou knowest not Giovan, who has gone to the wars: all the saints preserve him!"

The two gentlemen thus noticed passed by the convent, and entered a labyrinth of wretched streets beyond, bound on some professional visit, much to Dame Ursula's disappointment, and that of other gazers in the market-place, who hoped that the plot was thickening by their arrival. Let us, readers in the nineteenth century, do what they longed for in vain—enter the monastery and oversee the conference between his Eminence the papal nuncio Riverda, bishop of Terracina, and these two Lutheran ladies of Locarno.

He had been more than two hours convincing them, these weak women, with the triple power of his own episcopal theology, and that of two Dominican divines besides; and they were not yet convinced, nor even frightened. Brucioli's Italian Bible was their armoury of arguments, which all the authority of popes and fathers could not foil. His Eminence the nuncio was getting angry—with

some cause. For is it not provoking when the battering-ram that could crush in a fortification strikes harmless against a soft cushion ?

“ Truly, the Church was wise when she forbade the reading of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue to the common people,” he said, with bitterness. “ It hath ever been a fertile source of the most pernicious errors, for the unlearned and the ignorant will wrest them to their own destruction.”

“ My lord, we are ready to be taught,” replied Lucia di Orello, gently; “ we desire to be instructed by those wiser than ourselves. If your Eminence can prove to us from God’s word that we are wrong—”

“ But we must have such proof, and none other will suffice,” interposed the more impetuous Barbara di Montalto. “ We submit to no human authority in matters of faith; not even to that of his Holiness, or of a general council.”

The priests looked at one another. “ Thou art a bold woman,” said the nuncio, as he noted something in tablets before him, “ thus to declare thyself superior to the voice of the Church in all ages.”

“ But the voice of the Church hath uttered error,” answered the lady, firmly; “ and God hath

enabled us to discern that error through the light of his Spirit on his Scripture: therefore we will endure all things, rather than yield an iota of the truth."

The nuncio had grown suddenly cool: except for an evil light lurking in his deep-set eye, like lurid flame in a cavern, one might have thought he asked rather an indifferent question in his next words:

"And what, signora, call you truth which the holy Roman Church calls not truth?"

A slight gesture of his hand, imperceptible except to the person for whom it was meant, caused the Dominican beside him to record the answer in his tablets unperceived by the speaker, whose enthusiasm kindled a bright glow in her eye and cheek as she stood before him:

"All that God has written in his holy Scripture is truth. All that the popes have published in their decretals, adding to Scripture, is error. The whole system of the papacy is one vast error. Show me anything in its doctrines or practices that is not alloyed with falsehood?"

As she paused for a moment, the nuncio shrugged his shoulders slightly and his lips contracted back over his white teeth in a sort of smile,

“The doctrine of the adorable eucharist?” he said, insidiously.

“Thou knowest, my lord, that there most of all, thy Church has failed in keeping the truth,” was the undaunted reply. “Thou knowest that Peter and John never understood the sacred bread and wine to contain the very body and soul of Christ, which then sat with them at the table. But thy Church has made merchandise of the Holy Supper, turning it into an idolatrous mass, and causing men to worship the work of their own hands.”

“Barbara,” said the soft voice of her friend Lucia, as she pulled the skirt of the speaker’s robe, “you are over bold: you forget—”

“I do not forget. I know that they have my life in their hands—that they can send me to the stake if they will. But I must speak the truth; and I say that the Romish mass *is* idolatrous, and an insult to the majesty of Heaven as well as to the reason of men!”

“Basta! it is enough,” exclaimed the nuncio, rising with that evil smile on his lips still. “I thank you, ladies, for your courtesy and your plain words. My desire was to convince you of your heresy, and bring you back to the one fold under the one shepherd; and as I have failed, and these

learned doctors have failed, our conference had best come to a close.'

He waved his hand, on which glittered the costly ring of his episcopate. The Lutheran ladies made their obeisance and withdrew.

"Oh, Barbara!" said the gentle Lucia, drawing a free breath when they reached the open air of the streets by a secluded postern, "how I trembled for you! The eyes of that Dominican were like daggers. You are too brave, my friend. You have a lion-heart."

"Not braver than your own, my Lucia, though you have the grace of gentleness," said the Signora di Montalto, looking at her affectionately. "I know that you would stand as firmly as I, but perhaps with less rash demonstration of strength. Ah here comes Francesco."

"Well, signora, are you convinced?" the young physician asked with a smile. And it was apparent from the conversation which followed that others in the Montalto household besides its mistress were tainted with the leaven of heresy.

The house which they approached was more like a fortress than a private dwelling. Immensely thick walls, slit with loopholes and battlemented at top—the foundation on a rock circled on three

sides by the waters of the Lago Maggiore—one could easily believe that its origin was during the wars between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, when every man's home required the strength of a castle.

Night came down over the beautiful lake, arrayed in purple robes pierced with a thousand stars. In a turret of the fortified house a lamp burned hour after hour, gleaming redly out upon the darkness. It shone on the coarse yellowish pages of a large volume under the eyes of Barbara di Montalto—a copy of Brucioli's translation of the Bible. When her spirit was overwhelmed within her, when the sure reaction came after her excitement before the nuncio, she sought for cordial here. And in a still small voice these words breathed into her soul: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned: for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." And her dauntless eyes filled with happy tears in the realization of the presence and help of that precious Saviour.

A sound as of some person speaking in the next room, which opened from the turret by a curtained archway, attracted her attention. Shading the

lamp with her hand, she entered and stood by the couch on which her husband lay in restless sleep. His face startled her. The large veins were swollen on his forehead, the brows knit heavily, the lips drawn back from the clenched teeth. He flung out his arm violently.

“Off—off!” he exclaimed fiercely, grasping the side of the couch, as if engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle. “Villains, traitors! ye shall not dare—”

She could look on the agony in his face no longer. She put her hand on his shoulder and called him by name. Di Montalto’s eyes opened widely and glared about him with the indistinct vision of one suddenly awaked, and unable for the moment to determine where he was.

“It was only a dream, mio caro,” said his wife, gently; “only a dream.” And she pushed back the matted hair which had fallen over his damp brow.

He drew a long deep breath of relief. “It was horrible as a reality,” he said. “They were dragging me to the dungeons of the Holy Office, Barbara. I tell you I have seen nothing more plainly in my waking hours than the dark, reeking walls of that torture-chamber just now. I clung to

them ; I fought desperately. God be thanked, it was but a dream!"

His wife's face had paled somewhat, and a slight shiver ran through her frame. The dream was no impossibility for her.



CHAPTER II.

THE ESCAPE.

DI MONTALTO'S sleep was over for that night. Presently he left his chamber and proceeded down a narrow winding stairs, contained in the thickness of the wall, to the lower stories of the fortified house. As he descended the steep, mouldering steps, night air from the loopholes blew across his lamp at intervals, and the plashing of waters became a nearer sound through the great silence without, till he reached a dark embrasure, wherein was sunk a massive iron-barred door.

It had not been opened for a long time. Rust lay thick on the bolts, almost welding them and their holdfasts into a solid mass. Huge knobs of iron studded the ponderous oaken panels between the interstices of a grating of the same metal. A lock of ancient and peculiarly strong construction secured the door into a socket of stone.

“I must call Francesco,” said the physician, shaking his head at all this strength, and at a

mental measurement of the immense key in his hand with the force of his unaided wrist. And so passing from the winding stair by a narrow side-door which he unlocked, he roused his assistant and told him what he wanted.

“I can scarce account for the impulse,” he said, “but I am urged by some irresistible feeling to have this door opened and the boat in readiness without. You smile; you think the dream has not yet ceased beating in my brain; nor perchance has it, for I tell you, Francesco, the vision was marvellously distinct. Methinks it were a warning from heaven. I see not thy face now more clearly before me, boy, than I saw that ruffianly soldier’s a while gone. And yet my Lutheran opinions have always been moderately held.”

The student’s countenance had suddenly become grave, and he hurried on his clothes. “I trust it bodes no evil to the signora your wife,” said he. “She is so fearless; she may have spoken unadvisedly before his Eminence.”

“Tut! the Church contends not with women,” rejoined the worthy physician. “I will have that door opened in any case. I hope the boat has not quite decayed in its niche; but we shall see.”

When at last, with the help of two servants, the

lock was forced back, the huge bolts drawn from their sockets, and the door, after infinite labour, pushed open in its groove widely enough to admit the passage of a man, the dark, deep water appeared just below the threshold without, fluctuating with a sobbing sound. Afar rose the wild, white Alps, ghostly in the starlight, and seen through a black tunnel of rock, into which opened the secret door.

“Ecco!” said the physician, peering through the darkness with his lamp. “There’s the boat on its shelf. Pull the chain, Piero;” and presently it was drawn into its native element with a slight splash. A slender cockle-shell of a bark, it could hold no more than three persons. From long disuse the seams began to leak immediately.

Francesco and his patron set about caulking them with any rude means to be had at a minute’s warning. Piero and the other serving-man had been sent to their beds again; and when the job was nearly finished, the physician ascended to the roof of his mansion to look out for the danger of which his dream had warned.

All tranquil under the clear air and the starlight the little huddled Locarno lay on the edge of the great placid lake and slept. No soul seemed stir-

ring in all the scene save himself. And he, a timid man, and one wise in his generation as worldly men count wisdom, began to think it had been as well he had never meddled with these new Lutheran opinions, and thus disquieted his life.

The sound of oars, though very gently moved, broke up his reverie unpleasantly. He crouched instantly behind a projecting battlement, and scanned the polished surface of the lake; but all was motionless. Leaning cautiously over, keeping his head in the shadow, he was relieved by seeing his own skiff creeping along from the cove by the edge of the rocks. The oarsman he guessed to be Francesco, who presently shot out his bark one or two boat's lengths on the luminous water, as if to obtain a view of something high in the building. "But," thought the husband, "he is a foolish boy thus to betray the secret of the door to any one who may be watching. Those Holy Office people come on one like serpents. Pah!" and he shuddered again at the remembrance of his dream. In fact, Di Montaldo was thoroughly frightened, and a little pressure would have made him recant on the spot all his Protestant sentiments.

I say "sentiments," not "opinions," or "convictions;" for the latter cannot be recanted when

once they have entered and become incorporate with a man's being. But the first physician in Locarno was one of the stony-ground hearers who, in time of persecution, fall away and are offended.

He was tested at dawn next morning. A party of soldiers burst into the room where his wife was dressing, and exhibited a warrant from the Locarnese deputies for her arrest. Her husband involuntarily drew near and shielded her with his arm.

“For blasphemies against the adorable sacrifice of the mass!” exclaimed the leader, roughly. “For profaning the blessed sacrament to the very ears of his Eminence the nuncio! Come, doctor, make way; you should have kept your wife in better order. But you'll smart for it, or my name's not Andrea d'Agnolo. Well, signora, are you ready?”

Not a nerve of the brave woman had trembled; now that the worse was actually come her heart seemed raised above fear.

“Go to Bianca,” she said to her husband. “The poor child will be terrified. As for these gentlemen, I must ask leave to finish dressing in this turret;” and she moved toward the door.

“Nay, signora, but you shall have leisure to

dress even here," quoth Andrea. "His Eminence likes a woman to look well. Out, comrades! We shall leave sentinels at the doors."

No sooner was the last step withdrawn than she raised the hangings, touched a concealed spring, and the door of the winding stairs flew open and closed behind her. Her heart beat violently, her eyes were dizzy, as she rapidly descended the steps and entered the waiting boat, wherein sat Francesco and Piero. In a moment they had shot out of the dark nook, and the disappointed shouts of their enemies were dwindling in the distance.



CHAPTER III.

BEFORE THE NUNCIO.

THE trooper, Andrea, had employed himself meanwhile in searching the turret-chamber for Lutheran books; and making discovery of a very portly volume in a niche behind the hangings, he congratulated himself on the stroke of politic politeness by which he had prevented the Signora di Montaldo from having opportunity to conceal anything.

“Ho! Filippo,” to the sentry, who stood mute beside the door while his chief rummaged, “but here’s heresy enough to taint all Locarno. She thought to make away with this under pretence of dressing, forsooth! Try to hoodwink an old campaigner, indeed! I was not at the Bourbon’s sack of Rome for nothing. Canst thou read, comrade?”

“I thank San Pietro I cannot,” replied the sentry, on whose undiscerning ear had just smitten the click of the secret door’s closing. “It seems

to me the high road to being an heretic: those printed books do all the mischief."

"It's not a missal," said the other, dubiously turning over the coarse leaves. "I'll bring it before his Eminence. No more than thyself can I tell a letter, Filippo. My broadsword's my book;" and having opened a chest of wearing apparel, he shook out its contents on the point of said sword.

"Hist!" exclaimed Filippo, presently, raising his hand. She's very quiet within;" and he jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

Andrea strode across and burst the frail fastenings of the door. No one in the room; but from the window he caught sight of the boat flying over the gleaming water, impelled by the strength of two stout oarsmen, and with the signora seated in the stern.

"Help, ho! al-armi!" He stamped his mailed foot, and shouted with rage and mortification, profanely swearing by all the saints in the calendar and by divers of the heathen gods. His soldiers quickly gathered round him only to gaze with helplessness on their escaping prisoner. But *how* could she have escaped? Filippo prudently said nothing of the click of a fastening door which he had heard, and the remembrance of which had made

his ears sensitive to the subsequent silence. The window was merely a narrow diamonded casement of thick greenish glass set in lead, and moving a few inches on a hinge ; the lake lay full forty feet below, welling against the perpendicular rock.

“ I’ll try a shot with my arquebuss, commander,” said Filippo, in an inquiring tone, as he raised his piece and stolidly covered the fugitives. Andrea’s hoarse laugh sounded savage, but with a gesture he stayed the brawny hand which was cocking the clumsy crooked gun.

“ Truly they would leap if thy two-ounce ball struck among them ; but it’s not in the warrant, amico mio. Fools ! idiots !” and the Italian burst into sudden fury, “ why do none of you get a boat and pursue ?”

It was more easily said than done. Before they could be afloat in the boat of a terrified fisherman, the skiff bearing their prey had shot round a craggy point, and was lost to sight and to pursuit.

The story was a poor one to bring to his expecting Eminence, the bishop of Terracina ; and that they might not return quite empty-handed, Andrea and his troopers haled before him the physician, Di Montaldo and his daughter, as accomplices aiding and abetting the escape of a heretic. With

bound hands they were marched through the principal streets and the market-place of Locarno to the court-room where the ecclesiastics and magistrates were assembled. Old Dame Ursula, behind her relic-stall, crossed herself many times as they passed, muttering, "May the holy saints defend us from heresy and all the fiends!"

"But surely, mother, that sweet young face belongs to no heretic!" exclaimed a peasant youth who stood by. "I could believe no evil of the beautiful signorina."

"My little one," answered the crone, "you know not. I've been told the worst heresy oft takes the fairest form. She may be like the ripe fruit which is rotten at the core. His Eminence will know." And tongues went chattering round the piazza like a tribe of jays, having all the same burden, the escape of the signora and the arrest of her husband and daughter, whereof many versions revolved, each one enlarging the marvel.

Whatever doubts and fears the physician had experienced on the preceding night were as nothing to his sensations now in the noonday. His heart never very buoyant, sank and sank as a millstone in the Maggiore, deeper and deeper in depression, whereof the outward index was his chin clothed in

grizzled beard, which dropped lower and lower till it rested on his very bosom. And thus he stood before the deputies and the nuncio, no protector, in sooth for the slender maiden beside him; verily the timid nature of the girl seemed to have passed into the strong man's form, bending him like a reed, while Bianca's calm face and upright demeanour showed that her mother's spirit was hereditary. Not without effort was she thus calm externally; the tension of highly-strung nerves was visible in the brightly dilated eye, and her heart beat with thick pulsation against her crimson boddice. Yet she could not suppress a slight smile at D'Agnolo's relation of how his prisoner had balked him and gone clean out of his hands.

It was a slur on the trooper's abilities, and he knew it, that a woman should have thus outwitted him. He waxed redder and pulled his moustache more fiercely as he told the story. "But in any case, your Eminence, though the jade has escaped this time, I've brought a proof of rank heresy against the whole household of this worthy gentleman; for I take it where a printed book so bulky as this is found, any fool can smell Lutheranism."

His Eminence examined the book, passed it to his chaplain, and said nothing then about it. His

mood was sternly grim, for the lady's escape and the physician's ill-concealed nervousness suggested to him a satiating object. Di Montalto was pitilessly examined and threatened; all sorts of vague terrors of confiscation, torture, death, were hung out in his view, till the craven heart thought of nothing but crouching.

"Those Lutheran opinions were my wife's, most illustrious Eminence, and not mine. I never professed them to the extremity that it pleased her to do. Ask any citizen in Locarno, ask any of the worshipful deputies themselves;" and he spread out his hands appealingly toward the seats which they occupied. "Ask the illustrious prefect Reuchlin, who so worthily presides over this city, was I not by his side at the last *festa* in the chapel of Madonna del Sasso? Have I ever failed in payment of the Church's dues?"

And in fact he was correct. Di Montalto had been noted as a trimmer—one who would fain keep well with both parties, the Reformed and the Catholic. But when, still further to defend himself, he acknowledged that his absent wife had a rash tongue and a headstrong spirit, which it should have been his duty to keep under and bring into subjection, that he lamented the vehemence of

her opinions, and even deemed her worthy of correction therefor, the large bright eyes of his daughter turned upon him slowly with surprise, and perchance a lurking scorn in their expression.

“The signorina wishes to speak. My daughter, what wouldst thou say?” interposed one of the Dominicans sitting below the nuncio. “Speak without fear, mia figlia,” he added, insinuatingly. But her father’s warning look came in time. She only replied by an obeisance to the monk’s invitation. And when presently examined herself, she kept clear of the theological traps laid for her with a discretion surprising in one so young.

Di Montalto left the court a beggar. Complete confiscation of his property was the sentence passed by the seven deputies and his fellow-townersmen under pressure of the episcopal presence. And whereas Bianca walked forth as stately as ever, her clear brown cheek perhaps a trifle paler, her father came out as if ten years had suddenly been added on his shoulders and to the lines on his brow. No man of all his wide acquaintance was brave enough to bear him company, and he had been a coward and a recreant for no gain. Dark thoughts enough to bring with him to the old fortified house of his fathers by the Lago Maggiore!

Guards were there in possession. Bianca was to be permitted to take her clothes ; and he who but yesterday was the first physician in Locarno might lodge in an attic of his own mansion until the great exodus of the Protestants, a week hence, on the 3d of March, 1555.

To understand which vast eviction, we must go back a few weeks to one memorable afternoon when a procession filed through the streets of Locarno—a procession not fragrant with incense, nor illuminated with wax tapers, nor gorgeously apparelled in ecclesiastic robes ; nor a procession echoing with soft-chanted music, but more acceptable in the sight of the Highest than all these. Two hundred resolute and silent men, with wives and little children by the hand, walking to the council-chamber to confront the overwhelming power of the Swiss Diet, and confess their faith in Christ as the only Saviour, though bonds and afflictions might abide them. Was not the spectacle one which the hosts of heaven might deem sublime, while the superstition pageants of Charles the Fifth, emperor, were not worth the passing glance of an angel's eye ?

They advanced—the dauntless, unarmed two hundred—with their wives and little ones, and appeared in the council hall, greeted by the laughter

and jeers of the deputies from the seven cantons, who found a ludicrous absurdity in the protest of this trifling minority against the religion which the large majority of Locarnese had professed in the morning. The chief among the Protestants stood forth and declared, in the name of his brethren, their common faith.

The articles of this were few and grand, chiefly comprised in the one, that they believed the gospel prefigured in the Old Testament and revealed more clearly by Christ and his apostles. They rejected all human tradition—they prayed for divine illumination upon Holy Scripture. They abhorred all false doctrine and all licentious practice. They were prepared to suffer anything rather than be the cause of civil war ; yet they implored the lords of the cantons to have pity on the helpless women and children, and not drive them forth to exile and penury, especially at the present inclement season.

And the deputies replied, coldly and haughtily, “We come not here to listen to your faith. Our religion may not be disputed. Wherefore say, are you ready to quit your faith or are you not?”

Clear and bold from the lips of the spokesman came the answer: “We will live in it, we will die in it!” And without a moment’s hesitation all the

two hundred caught up the refrain, “We will live in it, we will die in it.” A divine fervour seemed to seize upon them: “Ours is the only saving faith,” they cried, “we will never renounce it!”

The names of those gallant heretics were taken down by the clerk of the council. Clasping hands together, congratulating each other on being called to suffer for Christ’s sake, they came forward joyfully to be entered in the list of exiles. For a decree had been issued by the Diet that the inhabitants of Locarno who professed any other than the “Catholic” religion should leave their native country for ever; and in the teeth of this edict had the brave two hundred come forward, knowing and having weighed their doom.

Di Montaldo had admired their courage afar off, and now he was forced to share the confessor’s suffering without the reward of the confessor’s palm of victory. He had gained nothing but contempt for his shuffling and evasions. He had saved not a single ducat of his life’s earnings, nor a hand’s breadth of the popular esteem on which his fair fortune was built. The bleak world was before him, to be commenced again in his declining years.

“I shall go to Florence, girl,” he would say to Bianca. “I cannot expatriate myself among those

terrible Swiss mountains from my sunny Italy. They talk of refuge at Zurich. Whom know I there? I shall go to Florence or to Ferrara. Your mother once knew the Duchess Renée. From her she imbibed much of her unfortunate Lutheranism. Yes, Ferrara would be best," added the physician, stroking his neglected beard meditatively.

"My father, it is God's truth; don't call it unfortunate," said Bianca, raising her face from her work. "It must prevail at the last."

"I hope so, I hope so," replied her father, perversely; "but I know that at present it has caused me the loss of everything. Young people are thoughtless and don't understand losses."

"Father, rememberest thou what the Lord said?" and Bianca laid one hand on his shoulder, raising the other solemnly as she pronounced in the soft tones of her native tongue, "Io vi dico in verità, Che non v'è alcuno ch'abbia lasciata caso, o fratelli, . . . o possessioni, per amor di me, e dell' evangelio, ch'ora, in questo tempo, non ne riceva, cento cotanti, case, e fratelli, . . . e possessioni, con persecuzioni: e, nel secolo a venire, la vita eterna!"

A passage which the English reader will find in Mark x. 29, 30.

“Child, child, you are too enthusiastic. And I wish you would conceal that book ; the sight of it may get us into further trouble ; though how much deeper we could be—” and he shrugged his shoulders dismally.

“The book is hidden, father, and I spoke those words of the Gospel from memory. But, father,” and she trembled a little, “they say that Nicholas was put to the torture yesterday. Thank God that my mother has escaped !”

“Yes, girl, put to the rack last eventide, and sentenced to death this morning. What horrible times ! I wish we were well over the Alps, or somewhere that a man’s head were safe.” And the physician rose to walk up and down the narrow stone floor uneasily, ruminating over his losses and his prospects, with the anxiety of a soul unstayed by Heaven’s strengthening faith.



CHAPTER IV.

THE WAYSIDE CROSS.

EARLY morning broke upon the Alpine country at the head of Lago Maggiore. Mists yet lay in the mountain gorges, islanding peak from peak, suggesting an infiniteness of expansion and of distance. Gradually they floated out and away, to be glorified into sunlit clouds in the upper air. Every shade of indigo and purple lay on the nearer hills and hollows, except where a struggling sunbeam touched them with spring's emerald; and afar, a chaos of snow-covered summits on the horizon, now revealed, now hidden in patches by the coquetry of clouds.

Here, on the sloping side of a glen which widens to the lake's edge, stands a peasant's holding—a rude, strong house of brown stone, set in a scant garden where the shallow soil has been cultivated to the utmost. Not that much grows in it at this season, when thaw has only just unchained the ground. The vine alcoves are bare skeleton scaffoldings, and pale buds are bursting on the fruit

trees. Narrow paths, scarce wide enough for the worker's feet, divide the strips of vegetable beds, and so steep are they that a stone set rolling adown them might leap sheer to the depth of the glen and be buried in its rushing rivulet.

On the ground-floor, lit by holes for windows, this brown house has a kitchen and a shed for two cows. We cannot say much for the cleanliness of either place. Our acquaintance Caterina sits composedly milking, and singing a bit of a Swiss ditty, amid sights and smells which would horrify an English dairy-maid. Perhaps she is thinking of Luigi, a stalwart peasant who lives a mile further up the glen, and who happens to be her betrothed, or *promesso sposo*, for she is deaf to many calls from the kitchen till the voice comes forth: "Dove sei? where art thou, little one? I've been calling thee these ten minutes past, and thou'rt dumb as the roof-tree. Listen. Thy father saith the snow has melted beyond the spring near the holy cross; thou mayest take the cows up there this morning for the new pasture."

It was a very withered and wrinkled face that spoke, but Caterina's mother was not within thirty years of what would be supposed her age. The hardships of peasant life, of exposure to the

weather and much labour in the open field had serrated forehead and cheek with deep lines.

“Thy father goes into Locarno to the execution,” here she crossed herself, “and thou’rt to go with him ; wherefore hasten, child, hasten.” And she went back to her work, the preparation of the morning meal.

Caterina felt a momentary shudder, and muttered a prayer for the doomed man who was to suffer ; but she had all an Italian’s love for a spectacle, of whatsoever species, and all an Italian’s confidence that the Church can do no wrong.

“If he had not meddled with heresy—all the saints defend us!—he had not been put in prison or condemned. I wish Luigi had not the way of talking that he has. He doesn’t respect the monks one bit, and calls the preaching friars a pack of lazy beggars. He’ll get himself into trouble with that free tongue of his—our Lady preserve him! He says only old women mind all those stories about the Madonna del Sasso and her wonderful cures. He doesn’t care a farthing about reliques, and called my bone of St. Christopher, which Mother Ursula says will save me from ever being drowned, a bit of dried stick. I’m sure I hope that isn’t heresy, for if it is—”

Now what the temple of Diana was to the Ephesians in the time of Demetrius the silversmith, the chapel of the Madonna del Sasso was to the Locarnese in the sixteenth century. “The image which fell down from Jupiter” had its counterpart in the waxen statue, gorgeously dressed, which received the homage of all good Catholics, and about which were encrusted a score of legends. And “the silver shrines” had their successors in a host of votive offerings of various values.

During her soliloquy, Caterina was driving her cows along the narrow winding path which climbed the heights, between masses of gray, lichenized rock. The clear, cool morning air stood about her, which exhilarates young blood like wine; it helped her to shake off that fear about Luigi.

After some distance, and many turnings, the path suddenly veered round a jutting spur of crag, which cut off all view downward, and beyond was a pleasant reach of green, sloping gently toward the barren uplands on high. Midway in the little glen stood a great rusty-looking cross, formed by two pieces of wood, once painted a dull red, but now blackened by exposure; and near the mouth of the glen was the spring, gushing from a crevice in the rocks.

Caterina started when she turned that way, for a lady was stooping over the well and drinking from her curved hand ; and the sight of anybody in these solitudes was unexpected. The lady, becoming aware of her presence through the tread of the cattle, stood quietly and looked at her.

“ *Buon giorno, signora,* ” quoth Caterina, rather tremblingly, yet deeming it best to be civil, even if the figure should prove an apparition. She was relieved when her salutation was returned in a sufficiently earthly voice ; yet she did not like the consciousness that those strange eyes were watching her till she came to the cross, and, according to her custom, kneeled down before it.

A hurried prayer for Luigi, for herself, for the man doomed to death in Locarno that day ; a glance upward at the rude spear, the sponge, the nails, fastened as remembrances upon the cross-beam ; and she turned to descend the ravine homeward. But the stranger had come quickly from the spring, and met her :

“ My child, to whom did you pray ? ”

The sweet voice softened the abrupt question. Caterina dropped an obeisance as she answered,

“ To our Blessed Lady, signora.”

“ Why, was it she who died on the cross for you ? ”

Was it our Lady who felt the spear and the nails?"

"No, surely," replied the peasant girl; "it was her blessed Son;" and Caterina knelt again for an instant before the cross.

"Then, my child, why not pray to him? He loves you, or he would not have died in torments that you might be saved. He is not pleased when we doubt his love, and think that we must ask anybody to ask him to be good to us. May he bless you, my child!" and the stranger passed on with rapid step toward the upper end of the valley.

Caterina was yet thinking of this rencontre, when she spied a man's figure climbing the rocks to the left beneath her. Before she distinctly beheld him she felt that he was Luigi. But for the first time that she could remember he did not seem equally pleased to see her: his brow contracted stormily.

"What! up the mountain so early? Wherefore, Caterina? I thought your cows pastured lower down."

She explained, and told him of the strange lady. "Luigi, she said what I remember you saying to me once—that the Madonna never suffered or *died for us.*"

“ Well, isn’t it true? But look here, don’t say a word to any one of this lady; I know about her, and you might get me into trouble.”

That hint was stronger than an iron seal on Caterina’s lips, and so Signor Luigi was aware.

“ See the flowers I’ve been gathering for you through the gorges as I came along;” he had them imprisoned in the cavity of his round hat, a mass of blue cyclamen, and purple gentianella, and snow-drops, and violets: “ wear a bouquet of them for my sake, little one;” and so they parted.

“ He had a wallet,” thought Caterina, “ and I feared to ask him whither he was going. . Alas! I dread lest he get into trouble through these heretics. He is so brave that he fears nothing himself. I must say more prayers for him—my poor Luigi !”

Thus seeking the true refuge for her care, provided the prayer were but right, Caterina, from this day forward, never could kneel at a Madonna’s shrine without misgivings. Luigi’s want of faith had much to do with this; but by and by the feeling was her own. The era of her blind credulity was over.

Now, however, she must go into the town with her father, and behold the great sight, for this is a holiday in Lorcarno.

CHAPTER V.

THE SERMON IN THE PIAZZA.

THE old relic-vender sits behind her stall, as usual, this afternoon of the high holiday in Locarno. On her knees is the *scaldino*, or red earthen pipkin containing a little glowing charcoal, over which she warms her skinny hands. For into this shady corner of hers the wind comes cuttingly enough down a narrow by-street, and age is apt to be chill.

Perhaps not from age or cold alone does she shiver, now and again, especially when her keen eyes return, urged by a species of irresistible fascination, to that spot in the midst of the market square where men are busy building up something. Full and bright the rich sunshine falls on them and on their work, as if it approved and caressed. Mother Ursula had seen such preparations before now, and knows what they portend ; the blackened timbers, the pile, the cord, are not utter novelties to her gaze, and she is bigot enough rather to relish the Church's cruel justice. Still the withered

face, puckered over as if knives had seamed every inch of skin, is singularly troubled. She is paler than the string of white beads that encircles her wizened throat in double row, and at which she clutches sometimes absently.

“He was guilty ; he would have been condemned in any case ;” so her thoughts ran. “There were other witnesses besides me ; and, moreover, could I refuse to speak ? It would have availed him nothing, and Father Antonio says that it would be a mortal sin on my soul.” She pattered off a set of prayers rapidly. “I’m a poor old woman, and couldn’t afford to buy indulgences.” Here she stirred up the smouldering charcoal with a huge rusty key, that of her own dwelling in a neighbouring alley : her finger touched the fuel for an instant.

“Santissima ! what bad pain ! Ah ! but burning must be a cruel pain. These heretics don’t mind it, as I’m told. Well, he will be strangled first. He always sneered at my relics. Many a good sale he has hindered. Still I’m sorry I bore witness, but I was forced. Perhaps the petitions of so many worthy citizens, true sons of the Church, may prevail with their lordships the deputies to save him, if he recant his errors.”

Thus endeavouring to quiet her uneasy conscience, which even now felt the murder-stain upon it, she looked forth again from under the penthouse of her black brows to the piazza. Already the crowd from the country was assembling for the spectacle, peasants with their wives and daughters taking up the best positions along the sides and on door-steps—a gay-coloured bordering to the rough brown houses.

“Well, Monna Ursula, and how fares it?” inquired the rich round voice of Caterina’s father. “So the fellow is to be executed after all?”

The old woman laid down the charcoal pipkin, and her countenance perceptibly changed when she heard that.

“The citizens have just come back from the council-chamber. His Eminence wouldn’t hear of it. He says an example is necessary to frighten the Lutherans. And, for my own part, I say down with all slanderers of our *Madonna del Sasso*!”

The impulsive crowd lining the piazza caught the words, and re-echoed them in a shout. It was not to be endured that any man should dare to doubt the power and glory of their pet idol, Our Lady of the Stone.

“What, girl! do you tremble?” for Caterina

clutched her father's arm nervously as the shout sprang up and circled round among the people. "She was ever a timid dove," he said half-apologetically, to old Ursula, who had the reputation of a sharp nose wherewith to smell heresy; "'tis no sympathy she bears for heretics, believe me. But what, mother! shutting up your stall? I should say there never was a better day for driving a good trade. Every man will want to prove himself a good Catholic."

The old woman was hastily gathering her reliquaries, bits of blessed bone and rags, and metal Madonnas, and crucifixes, and rude, flaring pictures, into a basket beneath her little counter, huddling all those reverend objects together promiscuously, as they had been so many chips of most unreverend wood.

"A touch of a certain faintness that seizes me now and again," whispered her shaking lips. "A sinking and weakness at the heart. Our Lady uphold me! Help me to lift this basket, friend; 'tis heavy for my old arms. I will get me home and lie down; these breezes are over sharp."

"Nay, good mother, but I will carry it for thee." And the peasant's brawny muscles raised the trifling weight on his shoulder, and took the

scaldino in his hand. “Caterina, support her, and lead the way.”

Old Ursula had never fully realized the fact that her evidence had actually brought a good man to his death until now, when she heard the failure of his fellow-townsmen’s intercession. She had strongly hoped that it would have availed to save his life, for he had already undergone sore punishment. She had been the informer who began his persecution ; she felt she could not dare to stay now and view the completion of her work.

“And they say,” quoth the peasant, walking after the two women along a street so narrow that his hands could without difficulty have touched the houses on either side—“they say he was tortured yesterday—put to the question they call it. I’m told he was slung up by a rope to the ceiling, and suddenly let fall with a jerk, to dislocate his bones, poor wretch ! I dare say he wishes he had let our Lady alone before now. But there’s no teaching these heretics.”

Dame Ursula uttered an irrepressible moan. “Here is the house, my daughter, and this is the key. Nay, thy father had best turn it ; ’tis hard on thy small hands. I’ll go and say prayers for the poor wretch’s soul, if I may pray for an

unrepentant blasphemer of our Lady. I'll go to the Church of San Giorgio."

"And thou wilt let me go with thee, good mother? I shall pray likewise. I fear to look on his death."

Poor little heart of Caterina, how fast it beat, to think that Luigi had more than once spoken irreverently of that very Madonna del Sasso, thereby repeating the crime for which Nicolas had to die.

But her father insisted on her return to the market-square; and they left the old woman muttering and mumbling in the gloomy stone vault which she called her chamber, and which was hung with musty valuables of the relic class.

"Methinks Mother Ursula likes not what she has helped to do," observed the peasant, shrewdly. "But there will be one heretic the less in Locarno."

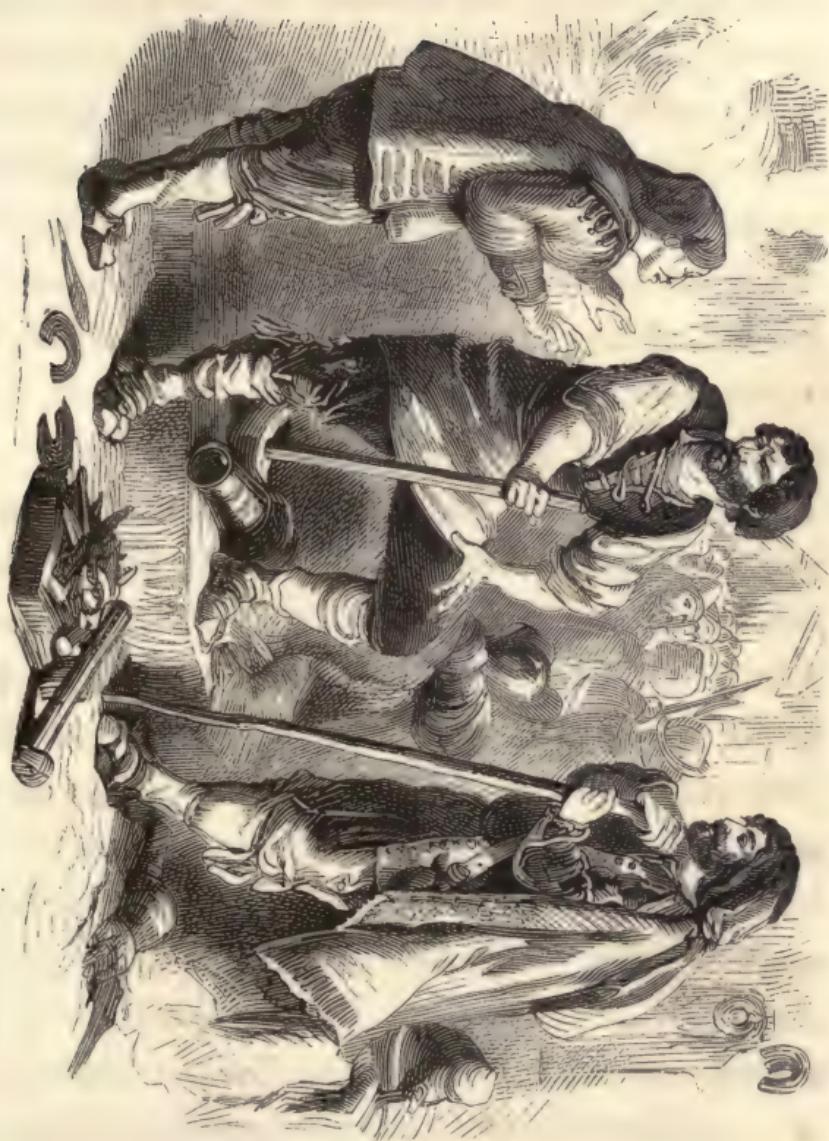
The piazza had become considerably more crowded during the interval of their absence. Guards paced up and down to keep a clear space all about the spot where execution was to be done. The workmen had completed their hideous scaffolding, above which rose a high black stake with a cross-beam; a gaunt outline well known in Italian cities of that age.

This stake was girt about with a broad pile of

brushwood and fagots. One or two executioner's assistants were building up the raw material into a proper shape for readier burning when the human body should be laid in its core. The laying of every fagot had a horrid fascination for Caterina's eyes. Hid in a corner of a church porch, behind her father's broad shoulders, she could peer through a crevice at the central object of attraction. She beheld seats arranged for the honourable deputies of the Swiss Catholic cantons, and for the illustrious nuncio and his attendant ecclesiastics, where was the best sight-seeing focus. She saw the windows of the tall dark houses filled with faces looking down, except where the great blank walls of the Dominican convent stretched along, incapable of revealing aught to the most earnest gaze. Even the roofs were crowded, so far as she could see from her shelter.

“Our prefect won’t much relish being present at this afternoon’s work,” remarked a brawny blacksmith to his neighbour the peasant. “He’s a Lutheran at heart is that Monsignor Reuchlin; but he had better beware—keen eyes are on him.”

“What! does he favour heretics?” asked the other, who had all a peasant’s veneration for the civic magistracy.





“Amico mio, though you are from the country, I should think you might know better than to ask that,” retorted the blacksmith, looking at him. “Why, he tried to save this very Nicolas, by trying him in his own court, and giving him a fool’s sentence of sixteen weeks’ imprisonment. Forsooth! as if he had stolen a loaf of bread instead of the good name of our Lady. But the Lords of the Seven Cantons are not easily blindfolded, and his Eminence quickened their zeal.”

“Why,” interposed a little man in front of the group, turning quickly round, “what would become of Locarno if the chapel of our Madonna were defamed? No more pilgrimages, if all men thought as these scurvy Lutherans do, nor votive offerings, nor traffic of travellers stopping at thy forge to shoe their beasts, friend, and at my shop to purchase images of our Lady. For every consideration of public policy these Lutherans must be extirpated. The Holy Office must become more vigorous.”

“Hark, father! hearest thou not the distant chant?” whispered Caterina from the shadow.

The chattering crowd—for an Italian assemblage is always talkative—grew presently hushed under that sound, as if a chill crept through their ranks.

“Miserere, Domine!”

Nearer and nearer swelled the long-drawn intonations of that prayer, appealing to heaven for mercy refused by man on earth! And soon appeared the friars in their gray woollen frocks and rope girdles, walking in couples along the victim’s death-path, rolling forth the unctuous “miserere” in a medley of bass and tenor voices. Two of them had the doomed man under convoy, alternately brandishing crucifixes before his downcast eyes and pouring exhortations into his ears.

There was a movement among the crowd like a ground swell when the procession debouched into the square; and another movement, much more thrilling, and a suppressed murmur when the pallid prisoner came past. The majority of the gazers had seen him a thousand times, this poor Protestant tradesman Nicolas, whose humble life could furnish no reproach, save the few hot-headed words against the Virgin spoken in the haste of argument with a neighbour—words no stronger than you, my reader, would pronounce if called upon to believe that in a particular church in your next street a particular picture was curing the sick and giving sight to the blind. You, safe in the nineteenth century, would scout the notion with in-

credulity. So did the tradesman Nicolas; but he lived three hundred years too soon for such liberty of speech.

That the weeks of imprisonment had told on him, and yet more the dislocating torture, those of his acquaintance in the crowd could see. The support of the strong monks at each side was absolutely necessary for his failing limbs. Some of the lookers-on misconstrued this physical weakness into dread or unwillingness, but that impression subsided when he raised his face and they saw how untroubled it was. The poor thin features were glorified with calm, at sight of which all the women crossed themselves and believed the heretic delivered over to a delusion.

But there were certain among the crowd who could understand the grand composure on that humble man's commonplace countenance, and knew that it proceeded neither from stupor nor from an attempt at heroism. Many of the Protestants of Locarno were present to look upon their brother's death, and to aid his constancy by their silent prayers. Once that he glanced round upon the people he caught a glimpse of some friendly eyes, and was strengthened by the human sympathy in his consciousness of the divine.

For a moment the composure of his spirit had been disturbed when he beheld the gaunt apparatus of death beside him. There were certain things in this world, certain joys in his obscure life, which made it as hard for Nicolas to leave it as for any noble sufferer whom history records. But God had opened his eyes to see higher joys beyond the black gulf yawning at his feet, and had ennobled him with the inspiration of a celestial love. For Christ's sake he could even die.

That supreme moment was not yet come. Into an old carved stone pulpit at an angle of the piazza clambered a monk, and began to preach partly to the people, partly to the prisoner. His coarse cowl fell back from the tonsured head, his ascetic face gleamed with eagerness, as he urged upon Nicolas a recantation for his soul's sake.

"The blessed padre Antonio! He would stir the very stones with his words!" quoth the women. "A most blessed man! They say he can even work miracles!"

But the heretic's heart was beyond his power. Perhaps the heretic's ears scarce took note of the fervid exhortation. Those near him observed his lips moving, and his downward gaze abstracted.

"Father, father," said Caterina in the church

porch, “let me away! I cannot look upon the death. I will to the altar’s foot, and pray for him if perchance even at the last he may be moved to forsake his errors: father, I *must* go!” and she swung aside the great folding door behind her, and entered the cold, dim church.

“A plague on the girl and her tender-heartedness!” exclaimed the father, after grasping her cloak in an effort at detention. But the juncture was too interesting to admit of moving his gaze from the scaffold. “Santissima! how firm he stands on the ladder! How he looks round! Ha! there’s the iron in the executioner’s hand that’s to girdle his throat.”

And so the sermon preached that day in the Locarnese market-place came to an end; the monk’s words crowned with the martyr’s deed.



CHAPTER VI.

THE EXODUS.

THE execution of Nicolas seemed to sever the last bond between the reformed Locarnese and their native city. It also served to lull persecution somewhat for a time, as a victim cast to a ravenous beast temporarily allays his fury. The Catholic citizens were not without emotions of pity for these fellow-towners who were about to suffer the loss of all things except life—of property, friends, home, country—for the mere sake of religious opinion. It was incomprehensible to the worldly-wise; only a few loftier natures had a glimpse of the moral magnificence of the renunciation, and admired without the power to imitate.

But the Lords of the seven Romish cantons and their counsellors the priests relented not. They procured an edict from the Milanese government, within whose jurisdiction lay the easiest passes of the Alps, forbidding any of their subjects to extend shelter or assistance to the Locarnese exiles, even during their necessary journey, on pain of

death. This edict greatly perplexed the poor Protestants; it cut them off from the accessible entrance to their brethren in Switzerland. Now their only route lay through the country of the Grisons, and it was improbable that the passes of the Helvetian Alps were open thus early in the year. In any case, they must depart from Locarno on the third of March.

On the evening of the day previously, a man and a woman might have been observed walking slowly along the mountain-path we have seen before, near the rude, rusty-looking wayside cross. They were evidently in deep converse, and the maiden had been weeping.

“Nay, my Caterina, but thou wouldest not have me give up my faith and my conscience even for thy sake?” asked Luigi, taking her passive hand; “thou wouldest not have a perjured hypocrite for thy husband? But, moreover, this separation shall be only for a time—a short time. I will return when I have found a home for thee, anima mia, and we shall be parted no more till God parts us.”

“But thou art leaving thy friends—thy country—the house thy fathers built—and going forth a poor wanderer on the world. See how all men

hate the Lutherans ! Thou wilt be no better than one of them. Oh, Luigi, where didst thou learn this wretched heresy ? Why couldst thou not live and die as our ancestors have done ? ”

He paused before the cross and made a reverence.

“ Because I have seen Him who died there,” he said, in a low tone. “ Nay, mistake me not ; I have not looked on the blessed Christ with my bodily eyes, but with the sight of my soul I have seen his most holy sacrifice for my redemption, and I know that friar or eucharist can do no more for me than he hath performed in dying. Therefore I must depart where I can worship him purely, without committing sin.”

“ Thou didst never speak of it to me before,” said Caterina, after a pause.

“ Because I feared thou wouldest shun me—hate me, anima mia ! I cared more for that than for his Eminence and all his monks.”

She had thought him stern in his declaration of departure at the opening of their interview, hard and cold in his resolve to cast in his lot with the proscribed Protestants. It seemed such a fearful sacrifice. Why should he set himself up to be wiser than all the blessed priests and bishops, and

join the people that everybody despised and detested ?

“ I hope thou wilt know one day,” Luigi had said, looking at her affectionately ; “ I hope thou wilt feel the reason in thine own heart, as I do. Thinkest thou it is no trial to me to depart, Caterina ? But I would do even more than this for the sake of the most blessed Saviour.”

“ How knowest thou that he would have thee do it, Luigi ?” she asked, with some shrewdness.

“ Little one, God has written a book for all men to read, which contains his will and his orders to men. In this book, which the monks keep to themselves, there is not one word about praying to our blessed Lady, or to the holy saints, or about purgatory ; and there are many words against bowing down to images. Now, if I stay here, I shall be obliged to do all that the book tells me not to do, unless I want to lose my life.”

“ But if thou didst propound thy doubts to a reverend monk—say to that holy padre Antonio ; they say he is most learned in such matters.”

“ What ! he who preached while Nicolas was burning ? I care not to walk right into the wolf’s den, little one. Thou wouldst not relish to see me strung up to the black stake.”

“Oh, Luigi, hush! Go if thou wilt. And I will pray our Lady—”

“Thou mightest as well pray to the mountain-top, Caterina; she hears thee not, being but a woman, and far away in heaven. But pray in the name of the most blessed Christ, who loveth us, and hath power to help. I will pray for *thee*, dear.”

And thus they parted, the chasm of a diverse creed between them.

Poor little Caterina wept abundantly, and felt very wretched, when next morning in the early dawnlight she beheld the flotilla of boats begin to cross the lake, a long procession of penniless exiles. Her heart was not more sad than many another among those two hundred families uprooted for ever from their homes. Luigi found companions enough in tribulation. Some shed silent tears; the more impulsive mourned aloud. A few firm natures held back their emotions, and sustained the rest by their words and demeanour. Perhaps not half a dozen among them all would have rescinded the declaration of faith which was costing them so much, but natural feeling would have way, and no enemies were looking on to cause the restraint of pride.

It is well that we should occasionally realize such scenes, that we should now and then lift our thoughts from the widespread toleration of our age, and look back on the less favoured centuries, when pauperism and banishment were deemed mild punishments for religious belief. Which of us would have held by his Protestantism as did these Locarnese, when to do so involved worldly ruin? From the midst of our safety and comfort let us gaze with admiration at the men and women who feared utter poverty and persecution less than a compromise of their faith.

Bianca and her mother (who had stealthily returned the previous evening) were seated together in the stern of a barge, hand clasped in hand. Theirs were the most heroic hearts on board just then, for they had the cordial of a glad meeting to string each flagging nerve. Much was told in a low voice of the various events since they had parted; often each eye glanced at the moody figure of the physician, who paced up and down the deck outside the shed which sheltered the women of the party. What a droop in his shoulders since a month ago! The look of broken fortunes was upon him. And without doubt it was somewhat hard, while he possessed not the spirit of a martyr

for conscience' sake, to be compelled to suffer a martyr's hardships.

At last the signora caught her husband's eye, and beckoned to him to sit beside her. He complied with a languid smile.

"Thou art looking wearied, my friend; the last weeks have told on thee, dear one," she said, tenderly. "Bianca hath been giving me the history of all that has taken place, more fully than Francesco's hints could do."

"Ay, Francesco," repeated the physician; "he is a good fellow. I trust he may be able to save some remnant of my property in Locarno. He has a rare head for business, though so young. I doubt that the confiscation can extend further than the bailiwick."

And over that he fell into a brown study, passing his fingers through his grizzled beard, while his elbow rested on his knee.

Which of us all would not have looked longingly back at the Egyptian flesh-pots under like circumstances? Di Montaldo is a representative man of the majority.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HERETIC PILGRIMAGE.

LOWLY the heavily-laden barges crossed the lake, propelled by the usual long oars, which in Italy are invariably pushed forward, not pulled backward, as with us. From distant spurs of the shore the goatherd and vinedresser saw the procession of boats, and knew that it was no pleasure party nor holiday gathering of pilgrims to some shrine, but the passage into exile of brave souls. And so surely does persecution work adversely to what its promoters would desire that even the dullest hind could not but think there was a reality in the faith for which these men and women were suffering the loss of the chief things which sweeten life.

Ere they were halfway to the northern extremity of the lake the brightness of the morning became overcast, threatening clouds floated up from the mountain gorges, and blackened overhead into dense masses. Luigi, who was working one of the oars with might and main, as finding muscular ex-

erion the best specific for his mental disquietude, sprang to reef the broad, discoloured canvas, which hitherto acted as sail, just before the stormy shower came rushing from its lair in a defile and burst on the leading boat.

Di Montaldo was roused from the reverie concerning his confiscated possessions by the sharp pelting of sleet, and by the oarsmen's exertions to render the shed a more effective shelter for the women of the party. The sail was flung across so as to curtain the open sides partially, but the passionate shower was not thus to be balked. It continually rent up the corners of this canopy and beat in with vehemence at unexpected points, each drop cold and cutting as steel. Bianca was very soon drenched and shivering, but no worse than many of the other poor women and children on board. A few cowered round the single rude stove and kept themselves comparatively dry. The men abided the blast as best they could outside.

“Coragio, signorina mia!” said Luigi, making his way toward Bianca and her mother through the crowded deck, and bearing something aloft in his hand. “The sky is clearing in the east; we shall have fair weather by and by. Fair weather of

every sort, ladies. But in the mean time, here's a *scaldino*."

The warm earthen pipkin was a comfort by no means to be despised. Luigi went back to his oar and toiled strenuously. The signora told her daughter what she knew of him—how he had daily brought her supplies of food during her concealment in the mountains; how he had told her his religious doubts and fears, those rifts in the clouds which precede the dawn of divine truth in the soul; how for conscience' sake he was leaving all whom he loved, and going in search of a new home where he would have freedom to worship God.

It is a pitch of sublime devotion to abstract principle which we in these days of complacent, self-indulgent religion can hardly comprehend in all its bearings. Yet poor Luigi felt anything but heroic at the present juncture. What enthusiasm can resist the combined influence of wet and cold? His sensitive Southern nature sank to zero. Doubts, desires, anxieties thronged over his heart. He could have leaped ashore and gone back to Catarina, were that possible.

"Friend, I will take your oar," said a voice beside him—the physician's. "My wife would speak with you."

Had not the woman's keen eye seen the sinking spirit and the need of cordial? She had the very best ready, and for others besides Luigi, in the broad book open on her knee. No human words were fit to breathe comfort to their deep poverty. God's own words might do it.

Forth shone the unveiled sun brilliantly as the diminished clouds glided away, having spent their showers; and she began:

“Thus saith the Lord of heaven and of earth to his poor children: ‘Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

“Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: . . . for I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not. . . . When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.’”

These glorious words came not hackneyed to the hearing of the exiles. Few of them, though

banished for the Bible's sake, had read that Bible through, or were acquainted with more than the salient points of its histories. A direct and express revelation could scarce have soothed those sore hearts better than did this adaptation of the old Hebrew verses.

Barbara di Montalto paused for a few moments, turning over the leaves, before she repeated—

“‘Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ Dear friends, is not the reward worth the suffering ?”

“It is ! it is !” burst from the impulsive listeners. “The kingdom of heaven is worth it all !”

“Ah ! we don’t know that so well now as we shall by and by,” said the lady. “By and by we shall see the glory and the gain ! Now the dark cloud shadows our path ; then shall be eternal sunshine. Let us further see what Christ our Saviour has suffered for *us*.”

And she read in her distinct, low voice the narrative in the twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew’s Gospel to the fiftieth verse. The deepest silence grew on her audience as she proceeded. The children, hushed by their mothers, nestled against their skirts and hearkened to that wondrous his-

tory of divine love and pain. No sound in all the dense freight of living beings save the regularplash of the oars and the voice of the reader, unless when an occasional exclamation testified to the depth of suppressed emotion in some heart. Tears were stealing down more than one brown cheek when the climax was solemnly pronounced :

“Jesus, having again cried with a great voice, gave up his spirit.”*

It was enough. The contrast between their small suffering and his mighty pangs was suggested to each soul of the exiles.

“The good Lord! the most blessed Christ! We love thee; we give thee thanks.” Such were their exclamations, and presently they burst into a simultaneous hymn of praise. From boat to boat it echoed, and was caught up as by electric impulse. All faces brightened; even Di Montaldo smiled, and a light dawned in his leaden eyes, as his daughter wound her arm within his and joined in the triumphal music.

“That is all very well, my little one,” he said, afterward, “but where are we to find daily bread?”

“The good Lord will provide, father. He

* A literal translation of the Italian version of Matt. xxvii. 50.

knows all about us, and that we shall have no food except he send it. I'm not afraid that he will forget us, father."

"Ay, and Francesco may be able to save some of the property outside of the bailiwick," said the physician, thoughtfully. His trust in the arm of flesh was strong.

Bianca was silent for a few minutes, then timidly asked, "Father, I hope he runs no danger—no great danger?"

"Danger?" repeated her father, somewhat testily; "why we are all in danger continually, especially we who have the misfortune to be suspected of Lutheranism, child. The very earth and air are full of enemies for us! If those rascally Lords of the Seven Cantons have not a band of *condottieri* on the road to the Grisons to fall on and slaughter us, poor outlaws of the creation, we may be thankful. Such things have been done before now, child."

She shuddered slightly, for sudden death is tremendous even to the most spiritually-minded when violence is the means. She narrowly scanned the nearing shore. Nothing but crags and rocks and green patches between. Ah! something moves on that beetling summit. Nay, 'tis but a wild

goat browsing, and raising his horned head to look wonderingly on the boats below.

“But, father,” she said, “the Lords of the Cantons would not be guilty of such wickedness; for when the nuncio wanted them to detain the children of the Lutherans, that they might be brought up in the Romish faith, the Lords would not consent.”

“It is tyranny, the grossest tyranny,” exclaimed the physician, chafing against his loss for the hundredth time. “These,” indicating his fellow-passengers, “have all some remnant of property, but I—I have none. I, a Montaldo, am a pauper in my gray hairs. I’ll appeal to the Diet; they must do me justice.”

“Father,” Bianca murmured, with an appealing look which would have disarmed the worst anger—“Father, dost remember the prayer, ‘Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven?’”

“But I cannot see that it is God’s will. I can only see it man’s most unrighteous and cruel will,” he said.

She answered nothing to that, for she felt that his view was natural enough; she only pressed his arm lovingly. Her last words worked the better for her present silence.

Rejoining her mother shortly afterward, she observed, with a little sigh, "Madre mia, what a wicked man is that Walther, who caused all this persecution!"

"We will not think of him, dear. Our blessed God has permitted his evil doings for some wise purpose, which we do not see as yet, but shall know hereafter. The only vengeance we can take is to pray for him, Bianca."

But the thought of many in that company would revert to the act of treachery and falsehood which laid fitting foundation for all subsequent injustice toward the Protestants, and it required a very efficient Christianity truly to forgive the prime mover in the iniquity. Walther was town-clerk of Locarno, and had some years before forged a deed, which he sent to the assembly of the seven Catholic cantons when the time was fully ripe. The deed purported to be a declaration on oath, by which the senators and citizens of the bailiwick of Locarno bound themselves to adhere to the Romish religion, and to their holy father the pope until the meeting of a general council should settle the world's theology. Immediately on receipt of this bond the deputies decreed that the Locarnese should fulfil their engagement by confessing to

their priests during the coming Lent, and that no rites of burial should be permitted to any person who should die without receiving the Romish eucharist. After that decree came the choice offered to the inhabitants either to profess the Catholic religion or to leave their native land for ever, and seven deputies were sent from the Catholic cantons to enforce the edict on the spot. Zurich alone, of the four Reformed cantons, protested warmly against this tyranny, but her single voice availed nothing, except as encouragement to the oppressed.

Zurich was now the refuge they sought to gain. They had sent a deputation to request shelter for their brethren in the faith. During those highly theologic centuries, when the pivot of the world's politics was a question of creed, no bond was closer between man and man than a common belief. Nationality was not so near a connection. These Locarnese, Italians to all intents and purposes, turned from their native land and their native language to settle among the foreign Swiss, and feel them the closest friends.

Before noon they had disembarked, and began the most toilsome part of their pilgrimage. Some few mountain ponies, some sure-footed mules, some strong oxen drawing carts, were the means of

transport—not half enough for such a multitude as two hundred families. So the weakest were sent forward, and the others walked in long procession after them. Many a tearful last look was cast upon their beautiful lake as they climbed the pass which would soon shut it from their view for ever.

Past the Helvetic bailiages, past the town of Bellinzone, trudged the heretic pilgrims, growing weaker every hour. But they knew it was not safe to pause until they entered Protestant territory. The country of the Grisons was this day's goal. They passed its frontier with an acclamation, and presently approached the town of Rogoreto.

“Father, look, look!” exclaimed Bianca, pointing forward to the barrier of Alps beyond, upon which wall of opal slowly dawned a pure, calm light, as if kindling from within, and cased with diamond.

“Only the moon rising off there out of sight,” explained the physician. “I’m sorry to see the mountains so snow-bound. We shall not be able to cross them for a month at least.”

He was only mistaken in his calculation as to time. Two months were to elapse before the exiles could pursue their journey.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RELIC-SELLER'S REMORSE.

HUS Locarno had cast forth her heretics on the wide world. She was a purified city.

“The accursed thing was rooted from her heart,” quoth the nuncio. She seemed by one bold stroke to have attained the *beau ideal* of the theologians and statesmen of that age—perfect uniformity in religion.

It was to be expected that a remedy so violent would leave the patient weakly and exhausted. After a few days’ fierce exultation, the Catholic enthusiasm collapsed in all but ecclesiastic minds. The gaps in the social and commercial circles of the town became disagreeably evident. Somehow, those ejected Lutherans had been pleasant neighbours, industrious citizens, faithful friends. Nay, they had been perhaps the cleverest in their respective callings, and the most upright; for which reason mediocrities and less upright tradesmen had borne them no good will. But long-headed people began to suspect that Locarno had injured herself

by such violent expression of her orthodoxy. The silk manufacturer the dyeing trade, had both been pretty well drained of their practitioners by the Protestant exodus. The blessing of the bishop of Terracina would be but a poor recompense for declining commerce. As yet, however, only the far-seeing few anticipated the real result of the expulsion.

Spoil was to be divided, and the wolves soon began to wrangle over it. Most Italian cities of the time had their Capulet and Montague, powerful rival families continually at feud about one thing or other, who kept civic life in hot water. These in Locarno were named the Buchiachi and the Rinaldi, who had been temporarily leagued against the Lutherans. Now that this source of union was no more, they recommenced the chronic quarrel. Street skirmishes were not infrequent, where the combatants on both sides were good Catholics, and the bone of contention some portion of Protestant property derelict. A very big bone was the sovereignty of a neighbouring village vacated by the heretics.

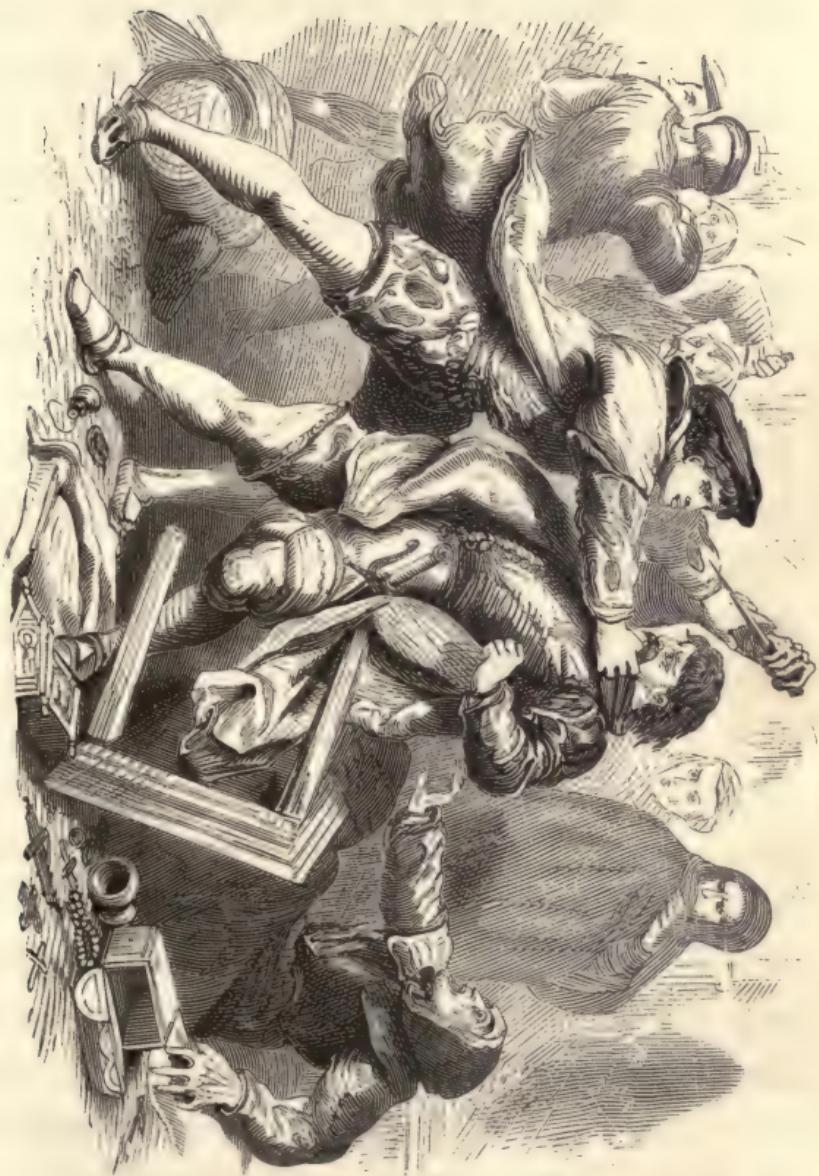
This, or some other cognate cause of dissension, had one evening brought on a brawl in a wine-shop on the piazza. The smooth-tongued landlord

sought to pacify both parties into a common consumption of his liquor, and, failing that, persuaded them to have out their quarrel in the street. Rushing forth headlong, the two foremost, charging one another with blind fury, came full upon poor old Ursula's frail stall, where she was just putting up her wares. A crash and a cry—all had fallen together, the relic-vender undermost.

“What, ho! good Christians, help! here's a woman badly hurt,” cried one of the combatants, when he had picked himself up and beheld the old woman motionless. “Holy Madonna! but I believe she's dead. A piece of the wood must have hit her hard. Well, fate is fate, and she wouldn't let me have that tooth of San Ambrosio's this forenoon under a broad piece. I may help myself to it now.” So, coolly pocketing the relic from the owner's basket, the bravo turned away to join in the mêlée raging still a few yards off.

But old Ursula was not dead. Presently a sharp pain forced through her dulled consciousness, and she opened her eyes to the faces bending over her. One, that of a friar supporting her head; the other, of the young leech who had been applying restoratives.

“I told you how it was, Fra Pietro,” observed



the latter pale and intelligent face to the former flabby and undiscerning one. "She was but stunned, not slain, and should be taken home now, poor woman!"

In which office he volunteered to assist personally. When laid on the pallet in her gloomy stone chamber, she plucked his sleeve.

"I know thee," she whispered; "thou art the young Lutheran doctor from Padua; it is not safe for thee to be here."

"Nay, good dame, I fear not," he rejoined, and continued in the same suppressed tone to give directions for the compounding of a lotion to soothe her sprained foot.

"But thou mightest fear *me*. Knowest thou not that it was I who bore witness to the death against Nicolas?" she said, her glittering eyes fixed on his face.

"I know it," he replied, bowing his head slightly. "Thou needest forgiveness truly for that misdeed, albeit Nicolas may well pardon thee for aiding in his translation among the angels of God, and count thee his best friend, Dame Ursula."

She turned her head uneasily away, with an irrepressible moan, from sight of those grave, kindly eyes.

“What are you saying?” asked the friar, curiously.

“She seemeth to have some charge on her conscience,” observed Francesco. Stooping over her for another instant, he added in the aforesaid low tone, “If we confess our sins to God, Christ is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Pray to him, good mother.”

And he left the apartment, with the usual “buona notte,” drawing his mantle forward, so as to conceal the lower part of his face, while a deep slouched hat shaded his upper features.

“It puzzles me to recall where I have seen that young man before,” quoth Fra Pietro. “Ah! now I bethink me, it was in the piazza the day that Nicolas was burned. San Pietro defend us from heretics! He took not his eyes from the pile to the very last. I fear much that he is one of like vein himself.”

“Good father, he would not have recommended me to confession with his last words were he a Lutheran,” said the old woman, cunningly.

“And did he so? Then is he a true son of our holy Mother Church, for nothing do these heretics detest so entirely as confession to a priest. Well, my daughter,” and Fra Pietro assumed his pro-

fessional drawl and his professional half-closed eyes, "I am ready, as thy ghostly father, to receive thy confession, and to give thee the grace of absolution when thou shalt have opened to me thine heart."

"Father, I must prepare myself by thought and prayer, for I would make it a general confession, and my old memory needs quickening. To-morrow, at noon, I shall be ready for thee. I am in sore pain now."

Fra Pietro hitched up his rope girdle and departed, his fingers raised in a hasty benediction; for he just remembered that the evening meal at his monastery was approaching, and this was not a fast day. A neighbour woman, who came in to trim the feeble lamp and gossip over the accident, had also gone, when Dame Ursula raised herself, and drew from her bosom a small bright object, which she kissed fervently. It was counted a most precious relic, even a bit of the wood of the true cross, set in silver under a crystal lid—a treasure so costly as to have absorbed most of the old woman's life-long savings; and so enviable that she scarce dare avow its possession.

Yet even the fervid grasp of this valued object gave her conscience but little ease just now. She

had never got rid of the blood-stain of that bearing witness against the Lutheran Nicolas. Two or three absolutions since had not wiped it out, nor all the spiritual sophistry of her confessors deadened the feeling of guilt. Uneasy from pain of body and of mind, she lay awake the livelong night, while the little lamp burned out and the moon traced with a silver arrow the loophole on the dark wall. Very little would have made the old relic-vender behold visions in that bright ray. A degree more of mental excitement, a pulsation or two of fever, and the moonbeam would have quivered with angels to her gaze.

Litany after litany, paters, aves and credos by the decade, she repeated to her long black rosary. “St. Barnabas, St. Lawrence and all the holy martyrs! St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, and all the holy doctors! all the holy pontiffs, all the holy virgins and widows, all the holy saints of God—orate pro me!” Such was the style of Ursula’s prayers, and hence may be judged their efficacy. Conscience was really aroused now, and no such opiates could lull it to sleep.

Midday was nearing when the little Caterina, missing the old woman from her accustomed stand in the market-place, looked into the dark chamber

where she lived. A fine young gentleman stood by the bed, talking earnestly. When he turned his face to notice what caused the shadow in the open door, she recognized the student whom she had seen in the piazza one day.

“Go on, signor,” said the tremulous tones of old Ursula. How weak and ill she looked, even by this insufficient light! “Go on; it is only the little Caterina; you may speak before her.”

“The best way that I can speak for thee, good dame, is to pray;” and down on the blocks of stone he kneeled and held up his hands toward heaven. What! was the relic-seller listening to a heretic prayer? Yet she dared not interrupt his few solemn words. But she grasped the bit of the true cross tightly as a talisman against evil, and kept repeating under her breath a host of aves.

“Blessed be all in this house!” exclaimed the friar, entering, with his three fingers uplifted in the stereotype form of benison.

“I was telling my rosary, good father,” said the old woman, to explain the devotional attitudes of the party; for Caterina had had her face buried in the pillow beside her aged friend.

“A pious and worthy office, my daughter,” rejoined Fra Pietro, “when partaken of by worthy

souls. And that young leech—he knelt also? Methought I heard his voice as I drew near ;" and the ecclesiastical eyes looked cunning.

Any reserve in the poor old penitent's conscience was quickly dragged to light by the machinery of the confessional. Fra Pietro laid on her a heavy penance for having hearkened to the Lutheran's prayer, and went away cogitating as to how he should stop this pestilence.

Ursula was in agony of conflicting feelings when the peasant girl returned. Her confession would probably cause the arrest of that kind physician. She should be forced to bear witness again. "I must warn him, I must warn him," she repeated. "He must fly. Couldst thou seek him out, little one? Alas! I know not whither to guide thee; and I will not have a second death to answer for, Santa Brígida, forgive me!"



CHAPTER IX.

AMONG THE FRANCISCANS.

THE friar had gone away from old Ursula's bedside in thoughtful mood, with that portentous under-lip of his pursed out and his broad thumbs deeply sunk in the rope girdle which bound his coarse woollen frock at the waist. His half-shut eyes fixed abstractedly on the uneven flagstones of the piazza, as he shuffled along in his sandals, were taken as the index of pious meditation within that shaven crown. "The holy man!" murmured the brown *contadinas* in the market-place, as with low obeisance they noted his absorbed demeanour from beneath their hempen hoods; "he is doubtless meditating on his breviary or reciting some sacred office." But Fra Pietro was only devising the best plan to circumvent a heretic; which certainly was all of a piece with his habitual holiness, and nowise at variance with the popular existence of the same.

The Franciscan well knew how dangerous was the leaven of these new doctrines, which threatened

to disturb all the comfortable ecclesiastic arrangements of society by their uplifting and disrupting tendencies, and to eject his fraternity, in common with all others, as the veriest scum of the ferment. He was fully aware that if Lutheranism gained the upper hand, the power of the priesthood, both secular and regular, was at an end. Therefore he hated Lutherans with a blind, unreasoning hatred, and would willingly have lit the faggots that consumed Nicolas, or any other sectary holding those levelling doctrines. Something of the Demetrius spirit was in it: "Seeing that by this craft we have our wealth;" friars by these superstitions had their existence.

And here was a young Paduan student endeavouring to undermine that great pillar of all orthodoxy, that mightiest engine of all Church power—the confessional! This pestilent heresy must not be allowed to spread; stamp out the spark at once, thought Brother Peter, and you will never have a conflagration. His dull nature was quickened into cunning by sundry hopes and fears—hopes of the merit accruing to him with his superiors in the order for vigilance and discernment—two qualities for which the monk had heretofore not been much distinguished; and, like all persons of similar

mental calibre, he was most desirous to be esteemed as possessing the sharpness of which he was devoid by nature. Likewise by fears—a chronic dread of the heresy, and an immediate dread lest anybody else should discover the culprit and gain the honour and glory resulting therefrom.

But he must put the conduct of the affair into abler hands than his own. Hence, when he entered the convent, and had learned from the lay-brother porter that their holy father the prior was absent on some spiritual mission in the town, Fra Pietro lounged into the cloisters and awaited his return with ill-dissembled impatience.

He was not the sole occupant of the old stone benches under these carved gothic arches. One or two monks were reading, others were conversing, and pairs were walking to and fro arm-in-arm, reciting Latin psalms in alternate verses, or, if less devotionally disposed, indulging in such gossip as the monastery afforded.

Very small and scant were the items of news sufficient to animate the whole fraternity. We, in this age of electric telegraphs and daily newspapers, can scarcely form a conception of the narrow range of thought, the exceedingly limited vision, of a cenobite of those cloistered centuries. His widest

horizon was the town in which he lived; his largest interests, the petty ambitions of his convent. The last few months had been times of unwonted excitement: the decree against the Lutherans of Locarno, the visit of the Seven Lords of the Romish cantons, and afterward of his Eminence the papal nuncio, the expulsion of the whole heretic population at one swoop, had, indeed, been stirring events; so much had not clustered together in any monk's memory there present, not even in that of aged, doting Fra Ambrogio, whose nerveless hands were spread feebly on his knees under the warm sunshine, and his lack-lustre eyes raised mildly to the face of each passer-by when the shadow touched him.

“But much I fear,” observed a tall, ascetic-looking man, the loftiness of whose head bespoke a favourable moral development—“much I fear, that only the branches have as yet been lopped off—the root of the tree of heresy remains in our midst. That wholesale turning to the faith is suspicious. I believe not in the devotion which must be forced at the spear's point.”

“Truly, truly!” muttered Fra Pietro in assent, from his seat in the corner, and nodded his round head portentously. “Truly, thou art right.”

“Brother Pietro hath made a great discovery to-day,” remarked the second monk in an ironical tone. “Wherein dost thou vouchsafe to consider our Brother Stefano right, good Pietro?”

“In all that he saith about the heretics,” was the somewhat sullenly spoken answer. Fra Pietro could not but be conscious that he was oftentimes the butt of the brotherhood; and now, when he was swelling with the importance of a secret, the sense of this was doubly galling. “I also know that the pestilence is not extinct,” he added.

“When thou seest wine, my brother, thou knowest there have been grapes,” said the other, turning away. But the monk Stefano paused.

“Perchance our good brother has aught to impart: thou wert in the town this morning?” he observed in the silkiest of tones, for the half-suppressed importance of Fra Pietro’s manner struck him. But the latter had no idea of a premature disclosure; and, besides, the seal of the confessional was upon him. He had really little to tell of anybody, though his surmises and suspicions had been increasing every moment in magnitude till they filled the whole field of his mental vision, and caused him to view poor Francesco Altieri, the Paduan student, as a monster of depravity and

evil-doing, who must be had in safe-keeping as speedily as possible.

Under these circumstances the good friar took refuge in nods and shakes of the head, meant to convey the vast importance of that knowledge which he held concealed, and the impossibility of revealing it to any but the superior of the monastery in proper person.

“Our brother has doubtless had a vision by the special favour of his patron saint,” said the monk who had before spoken ironically: “he would fain organize a new crusade against heretics.”

“Heretics! ah, those are bad men,” babbled Fra Ambrogio, raising his bleached face when he caught the word. “But Savonarola was none such. I remember”—and he passed his hand over his poor wrinkled brow—“I remember his heavenly face when he stood up to preach in the church of San Marco, in Florence, and the day when he headed the Dominicans to essay the ordeal of fire.”

“And the order of Saint Francis gained the victory!” interposed Brother Stefano, his cold eye kindling. “How came it thou wast not a Dominican, Fra Ambrogio? thou dost espouse their champion so warmly, albeit he was a thorough-

paced heretic as ever burned; the black habit would have suited thee better than the woollen frock, and then thou wouldst be of the dominant order—that which hath the Holy Office, and all power in heaven and on earth in consequence,” he added with some bitterness, for the rivalry between these monastic tribes had always run high.

“I—I—pardon me, good brother,” said the old monk falteringly—“I am an aged man and infirm. I may say things I should not. But the prior of San Marco was to my soul an exceeding precious comforter in time of trouble, speaking of the love of Christ; therefore I did cleave to him; but he is gone, and I am an old man, very old—I know not how many years it is ago.”

And the gleam of reasoning remembrance which had visited the aged brain died away into inarticulate murmurs.

“And he was once of the Florentine signory, sixty years ago?” observed the monk Stefano, with contemptuous compassion in his tone, as they walked away from the poor bent figure. “Me-thinks I should not care that my own novitiate for the kingdom of heaven were so lengthened as our good brother’s. Ha! here comes our reverend father the prior.”

The prior paused before the aged Ambrogio, with a few kind words for his infirmities; while Fra Pietro, big with the importance of his revelation, lingered uneasily beside the door he must pass at the farther end of the cloister.

“Well, brother, what wouldst thou?” asked the great man, coming upon him with a sudden movement, which rather disconcerted the slow-brained monk.

“My father, I have somewhat to say unto thee in private.” Whereupon the prior swung open the heavy oaken door, and passed rapidly along the corridor leading to his cell, having signed to Fra Pietro to follow.

It was in nowise distinguished from the habitation of the humblest monk in the convent, except by the rare beauty of a silver crucifix hung upon the wall in full light of the deep window, and directly above it a snowy skull resting on a bracket. What exquisite sculpture in that drooped head beneath its thorny crown!—what an abandonment of agony in the suffering limbs! The work was Benvenuto Cellini’s, who was then the highest sculptural celebrity in the world.

“My good brother, I must ask thee to be brief,” were the prior’s words, as he seated himself on the

hard bench, which, with a low table and a sleeping pallet pillow'd by a log, composed the sole furniture of the apartment.

In answer, Fra Pietro offered himself for confession. His spiritual father was listless enough at first, as expecting only some peccadillo needing absolution, or some cobweb of theologic perplexity troubling his thick-headed brother. But his attention deepened very visibly toward the close of the narration.

“And I fear, my father, that I may have done wrong in according her absolution when she hath listened to such rank heresy.”

“No, no, good brother—*absolvo te*—thou hast acted to the best of thy judgment, and hereby I absolve thee. But who, sayest thou, was the second person who heard this young leech utter his blasphemies?”

“A young *contadina*, my father. I know not more particularly; though I have seen her in the market-place, methinks, before now.”

“Then I charge thee to discover, and have word for me at this hour on the morrow.” He rapidly repeated the Latin formula of absolution, and add'd, “Thou hast done well, brother, to bring this matter before me, and wilt be discreet concerning

it elsewhere.” With which Fra Pietro was turned out of the cell, to relish the implied prohibition of his self-importance as he might, and find that in this instance duty was not its own reward.

The Franciscans were determined to prove their zeal for the Church as well as their powerful rivals, the Dominicans, who occupied the vanguard as defenders of the faith. What seemed a goodly opportunity was now at the prior’s feet, and he had never been slow to make capital of pious deeds: what could be greater piety than to capture a noted heretic, and to procure evidence against him sufficient to warrant the interference of the secular arm?



CHAPTER X.

THE ARREST.

THUS it came to pass that on the same evening after sundown three men, coming from different directions, dropped in, one after another, within the shadow of the “loggia,” or arcade, along the lower story of a house opposite to old Ursula’s dwelling. They did not exchange a word, but watched the street intently.

As a general rule, nothing watched for ever comes exactly when and how it is expected. Andrea d’Agnolo had begun to mutter through his moustache, and make various restive movements, like a warhorse kept too long in the stall, when that warning “Hist!”—singularly resembling the sound of a serpent—which Italians utter when they wish to attract one’s notice, issued from the farther end of the loggia.

Their prey was walking unsuspicuously up the centre of the narrow street, a cloak wrapped about him, so that they could not see whether he carried

weapons. He paused an instant after knocking at old Ursula's door ere he entered.

"Ecco ! he's trapped," growled Andrea. "Now for your part, good neighbour."

One of the three, who wore a civic dress and was apparently unarmed, stole from the loggia and crossed the few yards into the passage beside the relic-seller's chamber. The two troopers followed, but did not take the same pains to get within ear-shot ; they contented themselves with standing sentry at each doorpost.

This is what the spy heard :

"And in thy pain of body, good mother, I trust thou hast not pain of soul ? Didst thou confess, as I advised thee ?"

Strange advice for a heretic ! thought the spy within himself.

"Thou must go—thou must fly, signor. I fear the *sbirri* will be upon thee each moment !" exclaimed the old woman's voice, eagerly. "They will drag thee to prison—perchance to the fate of Nicolas ! As thou valuest life, fly while there is time !"

An evil smile grew on the concealed face of the listener on the threshold.

"Nothing shall befall me but what my God

pleases," was the calm rejoinder. "I will first dress these bruises of thine, good dame."

He could see that she was perceptibly weaker than in the morning, and that the healing process was almost at a stand in her aged frame.

"Thou hast lived many years in this world, mother," he said, after a pause of attention to her injuries. "Thou hast a long life to remember, and a longer life soon to begin."

The old woman groaned. "And my last action has been to do harm to thee, my kind friend," she said. "I have done thee a notable harm to-day—all the saints preserve thee, signor! I am a most unfortunate old wretch—Santa Brigida forgive me!—but I did not intend to work thee evil."

"Ask not the saints to forgive thee, dame"—and the eavesdropper's nostrils quivered at this first scent of heresy—"for they are doubtless blessed, but being men and women like ourselves, they cannot aid thy soul, nor wash it white of a single stain. But ask our most precious Lord to pardon thee, who died for thee on that painful cross;" and he pointed to a rude crucifix in one corner of the meagre room, where, with much red paint and unshapely carving, the death of the Saviour was set forth roughly and coarsely for common minds.

“He will pardon thee,” continued Francesco, withdrawing his gaze after an instant from the crucifix, as if the unfitness of the symbol almost pained him; “and he will give thee the sense of pardon in thine heart—a most joyous knowledge, a divine flame to warm thy whole being. This is God’s absolution, dame—without it, man’s is little worth.”

“Now thou speakest heresy, and I dare not listen to thee,” interposed the old relic-vender. “Fra Pietro laid penance on me of aves and credos, which this day hath been too short to fulfil by one half. Go, signor, go, and the blessing of all the holy saints be with thee!”

Long before this the impatient Andrea d’Agnolo had been champing outside, though noiselessly, and much disposed to go in and cut short the conference by a summary arrest. As the Paduan student stepped over the threshold, the spy withdrew a few paces into the darkness and the troopers laid hands on their prisoner.

Two against one, and fully armed men against a half-drawn rapier; yet the wild thought of the youth for the first moment was successful resistance; the next he was overborne and pinioned. Neighbours, putting forth cautious heads when the

sound of the scuffle had ceased, beheld three dark figures passing away down the narrow street, and the fourth skulking at some distance behind. Woman-friends, flocking in to old Ursula for explanation, found her in a heavy swoon, unable to give any ; and, as under similar circumstances in the nineteenth century, they gossipped and chattered an infinite deal while bringing the poor patient round.

“There hath an ill-favoured bravo been lingering about the street all the afternoon,” quoth one, whisperingly. “I saw him when going to draw water at the piazza fountain—methought as evil eye as ever glanced beneath a broad leaf.”

“Yes, yes,” added another, “and he frightened mio poverino, the little Jacopo, nearly into fits. Our Lady defend us !”

“It is just those heretics again,” put in a third oracle. “Locarno will have no peace till they are rooted out entirely. Just those heretics—nothing else !”

“Well,” said a woman who had been particularly active about the sick Ursula, and was bathing her temples with water, “I have no evil to say of the Lutherans. Whatever their faith be, their deeds are more right than most good Catholics.”

They visit the sick and the aged like any friars or nuns in an order, and all for the love of God, without any vows. I remember when my Geronimo was ill of the ague how the Signora di Montalto hath many a time ministered unto him with her own hands, and made savoury messes to tempt his appetite; and she was wont to talk no heresy, but most sweetly to discourse of the divine and most blessed Christ."

"Ah, that is the worst," rejoined the last speaker; "it is a poison which you know not till it begins to slay. They are too cunning openly to attack the Church, most of them. And as for the Signora di Montalto, it is well known that she uttered blasphemies in the ears of his illustrious Eminence the nuncio himself. Our blessed Mother preserve us from all delusions of Luther and of the devil!"

"Amen!" echoed the pious women, crossing themselves with great expertness. Luther and the devil were wellnigh synonymous terms in Italian ears of that age; and the sign of the cross was a specific to ward off any evil from either fiend.

Of the two, it is probable that an orthodox Italian churchman in the sixteenth century entertained less dread of the latter, whose influence

might indeed lead to the commission of sins, venial or mortal, as the case might be ; but a sufficiency of money or of penances would set all that to rights ; whereas the suspected influence of Lutheran doctrine could by no means be atoned for, and entailed sundry direful inconveniences in this world, even to loss of goods and of life—considerations which made the other influence clearly preferable.

A mingled terror and rage was excited by the very name of the great German Reformer. The mass of the faithful believed in some witchcraft exercised by him and his followers, which drew away men from their allegiance to the Holy Father, and rendered them insensible to self-interest, even to self-preservation, where the new creed was concerned. The perpetually inexplicable fact of the Divine Spirit's agency on the soul, leading it into all truth, nerving it for all disaster—that enigma of the renewed heart which has, since the gospel was first published, been a deep mystery to natural men—was accounted for in the vulgar estimation by sorcery during the great Reformation movement ; as at the present day the wise, the wealthy and the learned are too often satisfied, in similar cases, with the solution—“ enthusiasm.”

Andrea d'Agnolo and his troopers, possessing the usual conscience and creed of men-at-arms, were least of all able to comprehend the faith of the heretics whom they hunted down. Plucking a half-burnt brand from the hearth in the guard-room, the *condottiere* captain held it near his prisoner's face.

"Ay, I thought thou wert not unknown to me," he observed, flinging back his impromptu torch, which sent forth a volley of sparks. "I owe thee a grudge likewise, messer, if I don't mistake, for carrying off my lady the physician's wife after she was my lawful capture. Thou deservest to swing for that alone, my young sir, to teach thee better manners in future."

Francisco replied nothing. He was only just beginning to realize that he was in the power of enemies whom he had done much to exasperate. Some bewilderment was over him; consequences and possibilities were so jumbled before his thoughts that he but half caught the meaning of Andrea's words. The next that distinctly visited his consciousness were these :

"Do you hear, messer? I say that I would fain ask thee a question for my own satisfaction. What business hast thou, being a fine, handsome

young fellow, with the world before him, and plenty of advantages to make way in it too—what business hast thou meddling with the musty creed of these Lutherans, and getting thy fingers burnt—ay, and perchance thy whole body burnt too—in their heretic practices? Thou art no old man tired of life, nor hast had thy fill of enjoyment, and art now trying to secure the other world too; though if we're to believe our good fathers, the friars, you're going the very way to lose both. I'm a rough soldier of fortune, and I haven't many words, nor many thoughts either, beyond my sword and my goblet, but I'd like to understand this."

"They are all mad," succinctly observed the trooper Filippo.

"Yes, madness might account for a man's standing in the fire as if he didn't feel it while his ten fingers were blazing like torches, as I've seen at an *auto da fé*, which is the new Holy Office name for heretic bonfires; but it won't account for other things."

"My friend," said Francesco, "we are not mad. We have counted the cost, and set this world against the next, and have seen which is best worth our pains and our esteem. And, moreover—"

“Enjoy the present, and let the future take care of itself—that’s my rule,” interrupted another of the band, whose huge, sensuous lower jaw fully bore out his assertion. “Priests and women pray enough for us all.”

“Ho, comrade, none of thy heathenish notions here,” called the authoritative voice of the captain. “No man is the worse for an occasional ave or credo, and a relic or two inside his cuirass. Thou mayest be glad enough to don the cowl in thy coffin yet.”

For be it noted here, that to die and be buried in a monk’s habit was considered, “during the ages of faith,” one of the readiest modes of enduing the soul with some robe of righteousness; and, being so much less costly than a life of purity, and so much more comprehensible to the popular mind, than simple faith in the Redeemer’s finished work, it was a mode much patronized, and originated an extensive mercantile traffic in cast-off cowls, to the great benefit of divers fraternities.

“But I have not answered the noble captain’s inquiry,” said the prisoner when he could get a hearing. “The heretics whom he had seen die were men who knew that heaven was right before them to enter, and who preferred that joy to a few years

longer of this sorrowful earth. I also have seen such men die, shouting 'Victory' even amid the cries of their bodily anguish in the flames."

"And thou wert not terrified?" asked Andrea, with interest.

"My mortal heart may have trembled," acknowledged the prisoner, "but my spirit was the stronger for the sight, through favour of my good Lord. And I tell thee, noble captain, that should the good Lord vouchsafe to thee, even to thyself, the same grace, and put into thy soul his ardent love, thou couldst give up all for him, as the Lutherans do, and even walk to death with a glad face."

"Thou art right, Filippo; 'tis a sort of madness," observed D'Agnolo, after a pause, during which he surveyed the student attentively. "Yet there is no wildness in his words, except their wild meaning. Hark ye, messer, a word of counsel. Be not so open-mouthed before the holy fathers, or—the stake of Nicolas may be thine."

Here the person in a civic dress, who had followed them at a distance in the streets, and had eavesdropped at Ursula's threshold, entered the guard-room and made some whispered communication to its officer.

“Amico mio, thou hast some little way farther to walk,” D’Agnolo observed to his prisoner when the messenger was gone. “I would fain keep thee here all night, but it may not be. Nevertheless, I’ll giye thee a friend’s advice: throw heresy to the dogs, come out into the world and amuse thyself as a young man should. Though thou didst do me an evil turn about the lady, I wish thee no ill, and should be sorry to think thou wert food for faggots.”

“Worthy captain, my life is dear to me; but one thing is dearer still—my Saviour; and I dare not, I cannot deny him. Perchance the charge against me may not affect life. I know not what I have done, nor wherefore I am thus haled to prison. I thank thee for thy kindness.”

“Thank me not,” growled D’Agnolo. “If thou carest not for thyself, who else should care?”

Francesco was considerably relieved to find that his guard stopped not before the Dominican convent, where the Holy Office of the Inquisition held tribunal, but before the common prison of Locarno.

CHAPTER XI.

IN A CELL.

THE word “prison,” though still a sound of sufficient dread and discomfort, means something very different with us Britons of the nineteenth century from what it meant in the ears of Italians of the sixteenth. We erect large, airy edifices for our criminals, paying due attention to health as well as to safe-keeping; but the jails of olden time were regarded simply as lock-up places, and provided the walls were thick and the dungeons deep, the prisoners might die from foul air, or starve from scanty food, or perish wholesale from disease, without the free world outside troubling itself at all on the matter.

Francesco Altieri knew pretty well what he had to expect in the common prison of Locarno. A wide, low, vaulted chamber, with matted masses of straw in the corners and along the sides where the damp floor and damp walls met, each of these pallets occupied by one or two prisoners, so that a perfect fringe of heads raised themselves to look at

the new arrival ; an atmosphere of the foulest, for a grating in the massive door and a slit in the six-foot-thick masonry at one end were all the access to outer air.

“ You’ll find some of your kin there before you,” remarked the jailer, with a hoarse laugh. “ We’re accustomed to heretic guests of late ;” and the door swung back into its socket with the dull, heavy collapse of exceeding strength.

“ Altieri, my friend, is it thou ?” and a person who had been sitting apart on a stone bench rose and clasped his hand. “ I grieve to see thee here, although it is for conscience’ sake, I hoped thou hadst made good thy retreat with the exiles.”

“ I had wellnigh done so, but returned on business of my patron’s,” answered the Paduan student, trying to make out the other’s face by the dim light of the oil lamp, which flung a pattern of the grating on the floor from the passage outside.

“ Thou dost not remember—yet, signor, thou mightest recall the dyer Ottoboni, who refused to have his child baptized after the Roman manner, with chrism and cross, and whom the deputies of the seven cantons amerced in a heavy fine, enough to ruin an honest man ?”

“Forgive me,” said Francesco, grasping his hand afresh. “Methought I knew the voice, but could not recall the name. I have seen thee in the Lutheran meetings at the Signora di Montalto’s. I should have better known thee, my brother in the faith.”

They seated themselves on the stone bench by the entrance and conversed in low tones. Both were cheered by this unexpected meeting; for the poor dyer’s mind had been growing more and more rancorous against the persecutors who had robbed him of his livelihood and ruined his humble business; he was in danger of totally forgetting the precepts of Christian charity. Perhaps the meekest of us would do likewise in like case. And Francesco was the better for seeing one in worse estate than himself—one who had wife and children depending on him, whose lives as well as his own were blighted by this tyranny.

“A plague on you for pestilent heretics!” growled the occupant of the nearest pallet; “you will not let a good Christian sleep with your pratting! If I had but my trusty poniard and the use of my sword-arm, I would soon have you silent enough!”

Francesco turned round. He was young and

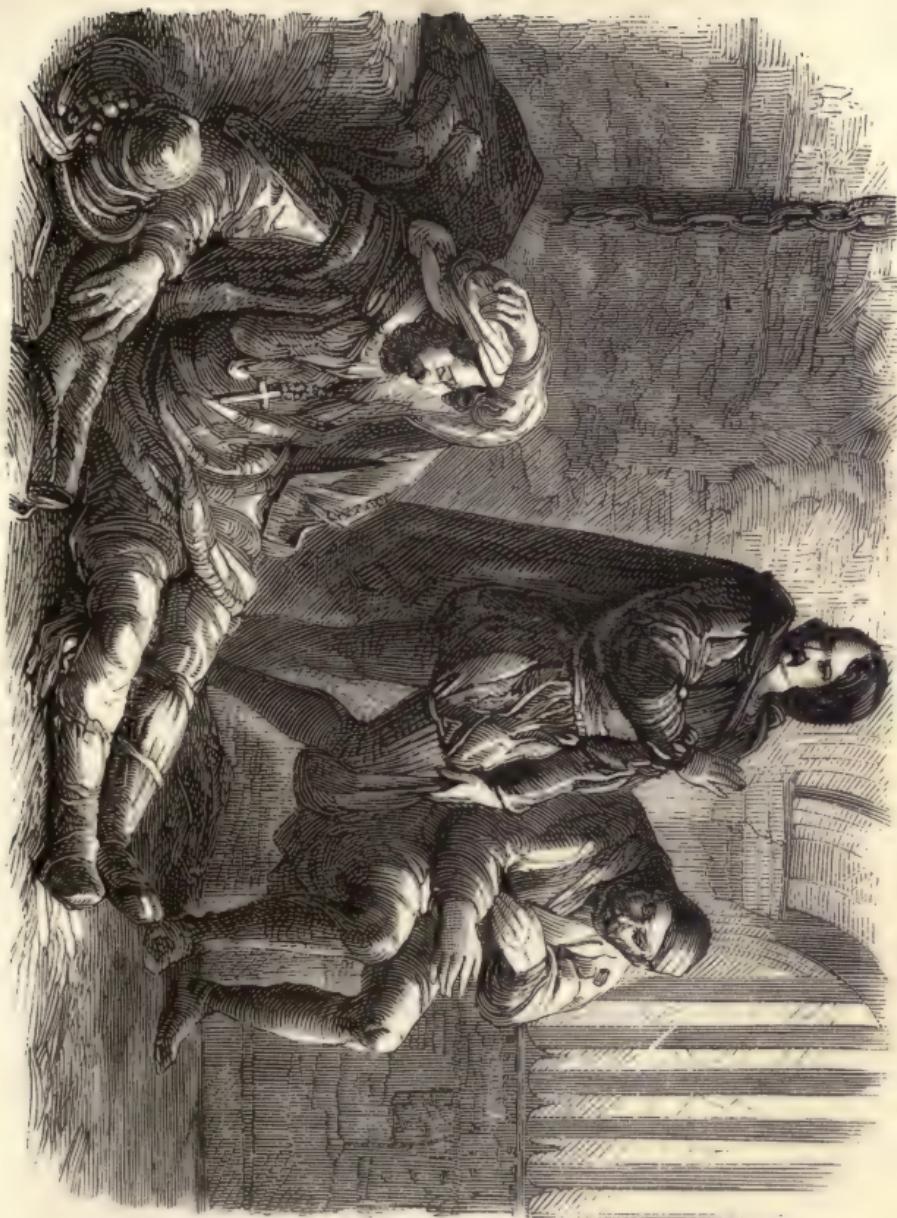
of gentle blood, and his heart was hot; he could not trust himself to speak for a few moments. Then he said, gently,

“Friend, thy poniard is not needed: we can hold our peace without it.” He leaned back his proud head against the massive, rough stones of the prison, and choked down the resentment which had surged into his feelings with difficulty enough. Presently the soothing came: across his memory glided those words concerning his Saviour,

“Il quale, oltraggiato, non oltraggiava all’ incontro; patendo, non minacciava”—“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; suffering, he threatened not.”

Francesco could not but be calm in presence of that great Exemplar. As for poor Ottoboni, his spirit was broken by his month of captivity, during which he had been the pariah among the orthodox criminals who had only transgressed the laws of God and of the state, while his unpardonable offence was, that he had transgressed the laws of the Church.

A heavy groan from that neighbouring pallet more than once disturbed the slight, uneasy slumber into which the Paduan student fell further in the night. A groan and the unquiet plunge of great



restless limbs, and by the dim oil light which gleamed through the grating he could just see the outline of a long, stalwart figure flung on the straw, with one arm apparently bound up.

“A brigand, brought in yesterday,” whispered Ottoboni. “He suffered from a sore wound in his right arm, received in his capture, as well as another on his head; and he is a very savage, as thou heardest a while since. They say he had uncounted murders on his soul: he was the terror of the passes to the Milanese.”

“Poor wretch!” But remorse had no part in his disquietude; it proceeded simply from physical pain and impatience. Ere long his inarticulate moans passed into very articulate imprecations.

“Friend,” said Francesco, “I am a leech, and might perchance be able to relieve thy pain if the wounds want dressing and a light could be had.”

“No!” exclaimed the other, with an oath; “no heretic hand shall touch my bandages, laid on with holy hands. Because of thy hateful presence is the blessed charm unavailing doubtless.”

Francesco was sufficiently versed in the popular medical practice of the lower classes to be aware that the charm alluded to consisted of three pieces of old linen steeped in holy water, and bound on

the wound in shape of a cross. At the time of application no weapons should be about the patient, and he should repeat three paters and three aves by heart: if unable to do so, somebody must say them on his behalf—a salve of most singular efficacy when used in faith!

Whether the brigand had not sufficient faith, or there had been some error in the performance of the rite, his wounds were none the easier when morning light stole in through the deep loophole at the end of the vault. Gradually the haggard faces and forms of the prisoners came in view, long after the outer world had been glorified with full day.

“And now, friend,” said Francesco, after some struggle with himself whether he should again proffer his rejected kindness, “I might be able to do thy wounds a service.”

The sufferer replied not; and taking the silence for assent, the young surgeon laid bare the brawny arm, where a sword thrust had passed through the muscles and severed much of the flesh; he washed it in water procured from the jailer, and bound it up afresh in linen torn from his own sleeve. Likewise to the wound on the head, cutting away the close-curling hair from its edges.

“And pray to thy God, poor man, instead of cursing thy fellows and thyself: pray to him to forgive thy sins, and to heal the sore wounds of thy soul as well as of thy body. For be assured that this is but a slight torment to that which will overtake thee if thou continuest in sin and repentest not, that thou mayest be saved.”

“Chut!” exclaimed the wounded man, “an indulgence will settle all that for me comfortably. Ten golden crowns will buy me a free pass through the gates of heaven, praise to our Lady!”

“And thinkest thou the Most High, who hath created the mines of silver and gold in the bowels of the hills, can be tempted with thy poor offering of coin? No, my friend, he hath given power to no man to admit sinners into heaven. He will not have heaven bought, but he giveth it freely to all who repent through his dear Son.”

“And it seemeth to me that were thy doctrine right, our holy father the Pope would have but a beggarly exchequer!” observed a man who leaned against the wall at the head of the pallet, and had narrowly watched the binding of the wounds. “Thy doctrine will never find favour among the great ones, good sir, and will only get thine own skin into danger. If our good friars didn’t empty

the people's purses to their own advantage by masses and indulgences, and such like holy ware, the blessed men would be reduced to work themselves—don't you see?"

Francesco looked inquiringly at the speaker of these free-thinking words, who immediately added, with a cunning laugh, "But I'm a good Catholic all the time, you know; I'd kiss his Holiness' toe with anybody, d'ye see?"

"And what when you come to die, friend?" asked the student.

The prison-door was flung wide, and a rush of the purer air without hurried to replace the exhausted and foul atmosphere within. Standing on the threshold, the commandant of the town-guard required to see Francesco Altieri, who soon learned that he was to go in his custody to the Dominican convent, where the Holy Office at that time held court, and fetters were placed upon his hands.

"Fare thee well, brother; God strengthen thee—God bring thee safe through!" and the poor dyer embraced the gentiluomo to whom at another time he would doff his cap obsequiously. But in community of faith and of suffering all social distinction between the physician and the artisan vanished. "God be with thee, good Ottoboni!" and

Francesco felt as if he had left the last friendly face. He passed the prisoner's wife and child in the courtyard, bringing to him some meagre fare, yet better than the jailer was authorized to provide; and the innocent babe, unwitting occasion of its father's ruin, woke in its mother's arms from the noisy tramp of the guards and wept.

Francesco had been in the Dominican convent before now to attend an ailing monk; the massy gloom of its apartments was therefore no novelty to him. The hall where Riverda had endeavoured to argue the Lutheran matrons from their faith was changed into a sort of tribunal: two velvet chairs were set on the dais for the inquisitors, and two secretaries sat at ends of a table before them. But the proceedings to-day were merely preliminary: Francesco was asked a few questions about name, residence and such indifferent matters, and presently remanded.

“But, most holy fathers, I would fain know the charge against me,” he remonstrated: “I would fain know whereof I am accused, that I may clear myself.”

The chief inquisitor waved his hand impatiently, and two monks grasped each an arm of the prisoner. “I warn thee and all,” exclaimed

Francesco, standing still for a moment by main force, “that I am no subject of the cantons—I claim the protection of the Venetian Republic—I was born under the Lion of St. Mark.”

“That may not much avail thee,” observed the second inquisitor, with a sarcastic smile; “for know that the Holy Office regardeth not race nor nation, being established above all civil power by the ordinance of our holy father, Pope Paul the Third.”

The prisoner was hurried away into the underground vaults of the convent, where monks were sometimes sent for discipline of fasting and seclusion. He was barred into a cell of narrow dimensions, and heard the footsteps of his guards die away along the dark passage they had come.

What a silence when that sound had passed! No greater silence could be if he was buried. Was any living thing in the cells he had seen near? He hoped so. But the mighty masonry would intercept the loudest voice. By and by, when the chafing of his spirit had worn off and his thoughts grew more calm, that silence came upon him more oppressively. He began to calculate how far he was from the other inmates of the convent, tracing his steps back as well as he could

remember the labyrinth of passages and stairways he had come. Ha! something moved across that slit in the wall, far above his head, on which his eyes were fixed with the craving which they have for light; something moved! Francesco sprang to his feet, and watched intently. Again!—and only a green leaf blown by the fragrant breeze, yet it shed a gladness on his heart which was to himself inexplicable. It was a stepping-stone for his thoughts to the outer world, from which he had begun to feel himself so hopelessly immured. Whither did that slit look out? On trees and grass above ground, certainly; and though he had not been many hours removed from the sight of those common things, he felt an uncontrollable desire to gaze at them again. He examined the projections of the rough stonework for a means to climb; but what madness! were not fetters on his hands?

He threw himself on the thin mattrass which was his bed, and groaned. The clanking irons on his wrists, fastened together by a short chain, seemed a pledge of imprisonment “*forte et dure.*” His own helplessness irritated him. But he knew of the unfailing refuge for this and all other ills. He betook himself to prayer: “*My Father! my*

Father! have I faint heart already? Can I not watch even one hour with thee? Shall I, on this my first day of suffering for thy sake, chafe against the discipline thou permittest me? Forbid it, Lord! I am very weak! Oh strengthen me!" In many ejaculations like these he wrestled against the adversary who would tempt him to repine.

Days passed over, and, except the lay-brother who brought him food and water once in the twenty-four hours, he saw no one nor heard any voice. The want of events made the time seem intolerably long, and he found but one subject of thought ever fresh, perennially new—but one topic which did not pall nor wear out—the thought of his Saviour. At times one verse of the Scriptures stored in his memory would stand out before him as if illuminated within and without with Heaven's own light; as if some angel painted each word with brilliant colouring of celestial dyes. He would lie rapt in spirit before that many-sided truth, and wonder how he had never before seen its splendour.

O Divine and Holy Ghost, rightly art thou named the Comforter! In many a wretched garret, devoid of all earth's delights, thou art now working this miracle of consolation, as in martyrs'

cells of old! Thou shovest of the things of Christ; and a glimpse at this treasury of heaven is enough to outbalance all the felicity of worldly men.

Reader, do you feel this true? or does it seem an enthusiasm without parallel in your experience? If so, pray to God to visit you with the glorious fact.

Looking back to the Dominican prison in after-times, Francesco could not say that he had been ever intolerably unhappy, even in his worst hours; and he could recall many a season of exquisite spiritual enjoyment. He knew that there he had been very near to God, which is the soul's bliss.



CHAPTER XII.

THE SCREW ECCLESIASTIC.

ONE night torches came along the subterranean passage, and the door of Francesco's cell was unbarred. He had been sleeping tranquilly. The sudden entrance and flare of light startled him to his feet. The next instant two stout monks had him in convoy, as on the previous occasion. Hardly were the prisoner's faculties fully collected, when he found himself in a large, vaulted apartment, and sitting on a block, to which the fetters on his wrists were quickly fastened by another short chain.

The two inquisitors whom he had seen before, being the Dominicans who had come with the nuncio Riverda, and who stayed after his departure to finish the work of heretic extirpation which that worthy bishop had begun, were seated on "the throne of judgment" in front of the prisoner. Their iron-like faces, wherein appeared no feature capable of change or of motion, save their cold eyes, would indeed chill a heart more sanguine than

Francesco's. Some large, low object at the side of the room was covered with a dark cloth. The glances of the accused turned uneasily thither. A shudder ran through his frame at the premonition that underneath was stretched the hideous machinery of the rack.

The inquisitors, skilled in human emotions, noted that slight shudder as a key to operations. Presently the examination began. A deposition from some unknown witness was read, narrating Francesco's conversation at the bedside of the old relic-vender on the night of his arrest, and considerably exaggerating his alleged heretical statements. And he was asked what he had to say in answer.

“That much of it is false,” was the impetuous reply. “That is, false as to the fact of my utterance on the occasion referred to; *not* false as to—” he hesitated, remembering that he was in nowise bound to criminate himself by too open confession of his opinions in the very teeth of the inquisitors.

“Go on, my son,” said the elder Dominican, in a wheedling tone.

“I demand to be confronted with my accusers,” exclaimed Francesco.

“’Tis not the usage of the Holy Office,” coldly

replied the judge. "But to what in this testimony dost thou plead guilty?" he added insidiously.

"I say not that I am guilty of aught," answered the prisoner. "Guilt is a word pertaining to crime, and I have committed no crime. Bring forward my accusers, holy father; let them meet me face to face, and testify boldly as to what I have said or done that is deserving of punishment."

"Thou art contumacious, my son; yet will I bear with thee a little," said the chief inquisitor. "Know, then, that thou art charged with holding Lutheran tenets, to the denying of the blessed sacrament of auricular confession, and also to the contempt of prayers addressed to the holy saints, whose intercession availeth much with the most high God. Thou art charged with disseminating these pestilent heresies on more than one occasion."

"My father, I would crave you to name the circumstances." Francesco waited a few minutes to collect his thoughts and decide on his reply. He was sorely tempted to evade a full declaration of his faith. Which of us, with the rack two yards away, and unscrupulous hands ready to stretch the victims thereupon, would not be assailed with similar temptation? The prisoner's glance was troubled and fixed upon the ground. Earthly

probabilities, earthly hopes, weighed with him and curbed down his soul.

“Take thy choice, my son, between recantation and punishment. The Church is most merciful to those who will return to her embrace,” were further words of the inquisitor. “She desireth not the death of a sinner, as saith Holy Scripture. And if thou wilt not recant, my son, I would be loth to put thee to the torture.”

“Father, you are taking my heresy for granted,” said the prisoner. “Now I affirm that I am no heretic, but a true follower of Christ our Saviour, and an unworthy member of his most holy Church.”

“Subterfuge!” exclaimed the inquisitor, almost angrily. “Thou canst not deny that thou despisest the sacrament of confession, and blasphemously castest slanders on the power of the most blessed saints. But I will speedily put thee to the test.” He drew over to him some papers, and after a momentary looking among them, read the following query :

“Dost thou believe, that after the sacramental words have been pronounced by the priest at mass, after he has said the holy formula, ‘Hoc est corpus meum,’ the body of Christ is truly and indeed present in the host?”

The prisoner paused for a moment. All the consequences of speaking the truth rushed before him, yet nothing seemed so utterly impossible as the utterance of the lie which might have freed him. Only a word! only to say that he did believe! but for worlds he could not stain his soul with that falsehood. Still human nature shrank on the verge of the avowal.

“Well, my son, we await your answer,” said the oily voice of the chief inquisitor. “Do you believe that the body of Christ is carnally and indeed present in the consecrated host?”

Francesco raised his head, and a light glowed in the previously deadened eyes: “Christ’s body is in heaven, whither he hath ascended to sit upon the right hand of God. And the pope and all his cardinals could not bring him down until he come to judge the quick and the dead. Yet I believe in his presence to all his faithful people.”

“The Zwinglian heresy perfected!” remarked one of the judges to the other. “Even the accursed Luther hath not dared to go so far as this. It was reserved for a son of Switzerland to cap the climax of heretical doctrine by denying the divinity of the blessed eucharist. Thou needst say no more,” he continued, addressing the prisoner; “thine own

lips have condemned thee. The only question now is, Wilt thou recant?"

"Father, if I am expected to declare that I believe what I do not believe, my conscience toward God will not allow of falsehood. But if you can show me that the doctrine of Christ's real presence in the mass is taught in Holy Scripture, I am ready to be convinced, and shall gladly be reconciled to the Catholic Church on that point."

Now be it observed that a secretary was taking copious notes of every word spoken on either side.

"We have no time for controversy with obstinate heretics," began the younger inquisitor; but the elder interposed.

"Out of compassion for thy youth, which may have led thee astray, I will endeavour to enlighten thee. Thou deniest the doctrine of the mass as a sacrifice for the living and the dead? Then hearken. In the Pentateuch itself is this truth taught; for what signifieth the Hebrew 'massah,' to concentrate, whence cometh the very name 'mass,' the name of a holy sacrifice appointed by God?"*

* This identical argument was put forward by Antoine Poussevin, ecclesiastical commissioner among the Vaudois in the valley of Lucerne, during the year 1560; and was considered most convincing—by the already orthodox.

Francesco Altieri had dabbled in other studies besides those of medicine, and even his small knowledge of the Hebrew tongue enabled him to see the fallacy of the translation sought to be fastened on the word “massah.”

“I have read portions of Holy Scripture in the original tongues, my father,” he said with deference, and suppressing the smile in which he could have indulged. “I do not remember where that word beareth the sense you would put upon it. But surely there are other passages where the repetition of the Redeemer’s death, as an efficient sacrifice, and the adoration of the host, are set forth? I would crave instruction.”

The prisoner could not wholly stifle the perilous, mocking spirit which was evoked by the Dominican’s lame argument.

“Though young in years, we perceive that thou art old in heresy,” observed the chief inquisitor. “We must try other means of taming thy spirit.”

A slight gesture of his head, and the attendants drew the cloth from the face of the rack, revealing the cruel apparatus of pulleys and cords across that dismal oblong frame. Here had poor Nicolas lain to be drawn asunder by torture. Now was he receiving his reward in the martyr’s heaven!

Francesco, at that sight, kneeled down, with difficulty by reason of his chains, and besought his Master to help him to witness for his truth. What intensity of prayer was compressed into those moments! Face between the fettered hands bowed down, he heard not the clink of iron handles fixing into the transverse bars, nor saw the lay-brethren fling off their serge gowns for greater freedom of action. All he knew was that the crisis of his faith had come, and he had need of divine strength that he might not be found wanting.

The chain was unfastened; his wrists were sore from the weight of the heavy irons. A strange sensation of lightness and freedom to be without those fetters! But it was momentary; his hands were bound behind him. Then his torture was not to be the rack, after all?

Inquisitorial mercy has provided grades of torment for its victims. Step by step are they inducted into the *arcana* of physical anguish. Agony is dealt out in drops, diluted less and less according to the endurance. The opening scene was generally an attempt to dislocate the prisoner's limbs—a trifling inconvenience when compared with the roasting of his feet over a brazier of glowing charcoal, which was a more advanced

stage, worthily occupying the next station to burning alive.

And so Francesco Altieri was suspended by a rope to a pillar; which rope being suddenly let slip, he fell down violently to within a short distance of the ground, every muscle of his joints strained by the jolt. Setting his teeth firmly, he did not even moan, though every limb ached sharply. Two or three performances of this dislocating jerk qualified him for promotion to the deeper anguish of the rack.

He could never tell afterward how long he had been lying there, how long the pulleys and straps were straining fiercely at his limbs, worked by strong men till the sweat ran down their faces. All sense of time, all consciousness, was swallowed up soon in excess of suffering. They asked him questions, but he remained resolutely silent, except for the groans and exclamations forced from him at every fresh strain of the ghastly machinery. At last the chief inquisitor commanded the pressure to be relieved for a few moments.

“ My son, our hearts bleed to see thee obstinate. One little word, and thy torture ceases! Dost thou recant? ”

“ O Saviour, aid thy poor servant not to

deny thy truth!" was the sufferer's feebly spoken prayer.

The Dominican's face darkened, and he signed for the assistants to proceed, leaving the subterranean chamber himself immediately. The powerless had baffled the powerful.

Before the cords had tightened by more than an additional turn of the screws, Francesco had swooned.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE SENTENCE.

ASLOW, heavy dawning of consciousness, as in the gradual withdrawal of some terrific dream, which has filled hours with perplexed involutions of misfortune, and the Paduan student opened his weary eyes. Pain—pain all over—and the utterest exhaustion; these were his waking sensations, when, with a long-drawn breath, the swoon passed.

No longer on the rack, nor in the subterranean vault, lit by swinging, smoky oil-lamps shedding radiance on hard faces dealing out torture. He was alone in his old cell, with early daylight streaming through the loophole, and the blessed air blowing in upon his fevered head.

The old cell!—but could he have seen himself as he lay there, and compared himself with the Francesco Altieri who had issued thence on the previous night, he would scarce have recognized his own form. Gaunt and haggard, with lines furrowed on his face, which might have been the work

of five years' hardship or of five months' illness; every nerve flaccid and unstrung, every sinew distended, till his body was one huge bruised sprain, and to move was a fresh anguish, he could only lie still and endure passively.

Sleep, or an unconsciousness, came at intervals. Toward midday he, roused with a great thirst upon him, perceived that an earthen jar had been left within his reach; and when he had grasped it with infinite pains, he drank copiously of the water. After that his brain was clearer. The sort of dull submissiveness of devotion which had lain in his spirit became more active; he was able to pray and to think.

Many days passed before he could stand without support. He anticipated that another visit to the torture-chamber was preparing for him, but the lay-brother, who was his sole jailer, came morning after morning with his food, as dumb as though he could not hear when the prisoner spoke; and no one else ever came. When the last bolt had shot into its sheath, and the sandalled feet trod away in the passage, Francesco might reckon upon total silence, except for vesper and matin bells, until the same hour next day. Sometimes he sang aloud himself, to break that incubus from his

heart. Then he would get rapt in the hymn, and fancy his voice joining the Church triumphant, even through dense walls and from this living grave.

But how long was it to last? Had they indeed sentenced him to solitary confinement for life? He shuddered at the thought of years lapsing through that cell—of his head growing old and gray in its murky shadows. Intolerable! The fiery death would be more easily borne than such living burial. Thus, as he received bodily strength, the stagnation of this existence began to corrode his spirit.

That paltry incident, the leaf blowing across the loophole—he had recognized it as an ivy-leaf by this time, and guessed that the wall was grown over outside—he would watch for, lying on his pallet, with an interest for which he almost despised himself. He had no fetters on his hands now, and so essayed to climb by the rough masonry to the opening as soon as he was strong enough. By picking out the mortar, tediously, for it was wellnigh as hard as the stones it cemented, he widened niches for his feet and fingers. Oh joy! when at last one evening he grasped a bar across that window-slit, and saw a glimpse at the outer earth again!

Into a garden the loophole looked; for grass was level with his eye, and trunks of trees close by—olives, he knew by their gnarled and tortuous outlines. Dead gray wall shut in the enclosure, but brilliant sunshine lay upon that grassy expanse for some time every day, till the shadows of unseen buildings stole across it. Francesco could soon have constructed a dial by the regular marchings of their shade; and the bell-tower of the convent was sketched in variable slopes of profile, continuing to lie there sometimes when the night air was full of moonlight.

Once a monk came to read his hours while walking under the dead gray wall. Without thinking of consequences, Francesco called aloud in his first gladness at beholding an accessible human being, whereupon the good friar paused, looked round, and up and down, seeming to wait for a repetition, which the prisoner was wise enough to withhold. *Fra Domenico* crossed himself piously, uttered a short exorcism against all things evil, and took his hours elsewhere for completion. Shortly afterward a pair of monks entered the little garden, looked down and up and about with the same sort of gesture, whispering each other ominously. Francesco could scarce re-

frain from scaring their superstitions with another cry. But the risk was too great. If his stolen outlook were discovered, he would certainly be consigned to a still more lonely cell.

The prior's private garden had thenceforth an uncanny reputation; the hardiest monks ventured not within its precincts after vespers, and even in the noonday none cared to read his breviary there alone. Fra Domenico would tell the tale of that strange cry to the novices, in recreation-time, with various imaginative interpellations, which soon grew into historical facts. It is so hard to avoid being a hero when one tells one's own tale!

But even the view from his loophole had palled upon poor Francesco ere long. He implored his dumb servitor for a book—for writing materials—anything to employ himself. He might as well have petitioned one of the stalwart olives outside. The lay-brother made as though he heard not. A terrible torture is utter idleness and hopelessness!

The Christian can never be hopeless, never without resource. He has a personal Friend whom no bars and bolts can shut out, no banishment distance. Francesco was thrown more upon his spiritual relationships by this long isolation. God the Father above him—God the Redeemer beside

him—God the Spirit within him. When he was enabled to realize this, the meagre cell became a chamber of delights. And he knew that even in the present evil world the Lord of hosts has given them that love him such good things as pass carnal man's understanding—such good things as merely mortal eye hath not seen, neither hath ear heard.

Two months had probably passed from the day that he had last crossed the threshold, when again the torches flared into his cell at midnight, and he was brought forth once more. Steeling his nerves for anticipated suffering, he entered the torture chamber—the hall of judgment in inquisitorial phrase.

The Dominicans who had previously examined him were not present. In their stead sat the prior of the convent. A record of the foregoing process was read, and the prisoner was asked whether he assented to its truth.

On his reply in the affirmative, the prior took up another paper and read aloud the sentence of the Holy Office: That whereas the accused, Francesco Altieri, had confessed the heretical principles laid to his charge by several credible witnesses, and having been put to the question, had signified his desire of being reconciled to the Holy Catholic

Church, thereby virtually recanting the aforesaid heresies, the court of the Congregation of the Holy Office of its clemency decreed that the extreme punishment to be inflicted on the said Francesco Altieri, graduate in medicine of the University of Padua, was confiscation of goods and perpetual banishment from the Locarnese and the seven cantons, adding the usual threat of the penalty of death should he return.

One throb of delight in the prisoner's heart; the next instant he was grave as though stepping to the rack instead of regaining liberty :

“Father they have misunderstood—I did not recant, I never meant to recant. The words I spoke cannot bear that interpretation.”

The prior, a former acquaintance of Altieri's, had left his elevated seat immediately on the declaration of the sentence, and with it quite put off his official manner. Inquisitors' work was very distasteful to his easy, indulgent nature, and he hated the arrears of such business left him by the Roman doctors.

“We are not here to judge thee, but to pronounce a sentence previously concluded on, my son,” he said, blandly enough. “'Tis a mistake, if there be one, for which thou shouldest be thank-

ful, and bless our Lady, instead of pecking at thy good fortune. And if thou art so ambitious to be a martyr, there will be fires enow in all Italy soon, for his holiness Pope Paul the Fourth has been grand inquisitor himself, and likes the trade."

"What, Cardinal Caraffa pope!" exclaimed the prisoner, eagerly. "He who was once of 'the Oratory of Divine Love'—once a Reformer?"

"Even so," quoth the prior, dryly. "And now, my son, I counsel thee to withdraw thyself from reach of the same Holy Office. A boat waits to take thee from this bailiwick into neutral soil. Thou didst once do me a service in curing for me a troublesome pleurisy, therefore I wish thee well, and did speak on thy behalf to the Roman inquisitor. *Buon viaggio, my son;*" and the good-natured monk moved away, waving a benediction.

That piece of political news, the election of a fresh pope, turned the current of Francesco's feelings wonderfully. The great surging world of living beings, from whom he had been so long cut off, suddenly arose again before his eyes, and the young blood pulsed quicker at thought of its struggles, its ambitions, its countless interlacing interests. He shook the slough of the prison from his heart. Oh how fresh was the open air!—how

glittering the silver stars!—how beautiful even the night earth, on which he had not looked for so long a time! Andrea d'Agnolo and a couple of his “free lances” were at the monastery gate to convoy the banished to the water’s edge.

“Methinks thou hast learned some sharp lessons since we spoke together in the guard-room, good friend,” said the trooper, when he recognized his charge. “What sayest thou, Filippo? Is he not taller than his wont—taller by an inch or two of the rack?” The soldier appealed to laughed gratingly, and signified assent. “I hope thou art a cured case of heresy now,” continued Andrea, “and wilt give these merciful priests no more trouble. Indeed, unless thou wert, thou wouldst scarce be walking toward freedom now.”

“Friend,” began the prisoner, “if thou meanest that I have grown tired of my faith, or have found it not worth the suffering for, thou art mistaken. Christ’s soldiers do not desert his colours so; they love their general too well.”

“I never shall understand it—never,” replied the trooper. “Why men who might lead an easy life persist in leading a hard and painful life, and not only cut themselves off every enjoyment—for wine and dice find no favour among you ‘Oltra-

montani'—but also run the risk of rack and stake—for what? an idea, a thing they neither hear nor see. Andrea d'Agnolo cannot fathom it."

Did not Francesco remember that prophecy of the far-seeing apostle's—"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"?

And if any should glance upon this page who exult in the pride of intellect as the bright, keen weapon to cut the Gordian knot of theology, and rather despise the simple, unquestioning faith of the unlettered or the thoroughly submissive Christian, beware lest this be foolishness to your wisdom, only because you are one of those that perish!

"My friend," said Francesco, "suppose thou wert sentenced to a sore punishment for some crime, and one came forward who was innocent, to bear the suffering for thee, simply because he loved thee, and would not have thee suffer: wouldst thou not love that person evermore? wouldst thou not hold by him for thy life long?"

“Find me the friend first,” said the trooper, incredulously. “Most men love themselves better than anybody else.”

“I found such a friend, once; and shall I join his enemies who dishonour him? Never! Moreover he hath done for thee what he hath done for me, taken all the punishment due for thy sins and borne it on the cross, to which his blessed limbs were nailed by unholy hands: he hath done this for thee, and thou canst never be condemned so thou but believe.”

“Thou mightest be a preaching friar, messer, thou speakest with such unction,” carelessly replied the trooper. “Meanwhile, here we are at the boat: Filippo, see this good gentleman safe out of the bailiwick, and let him have converse with none while in thy custody. Fair voyage, my excellent sir; *felicissima notte.*” Trolling a stave of a soldier’s song, the condottiero disappeared in the darkness.



CHAPTER XIV.

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

FULL a fortnight after Francesco Altieri had been landed on the opposite shore of the Lago Maggiore to make his way as best he could without money or friends in a strange country, he found himself travelling through the Grison Alps, staff in hand, toward the exiles' refuge at Zurich. For he had learned at Rogoreto that after a forced sojourn of two months, on account of the continuance of snow and ice in the defiles beyond, the majority of the Locarnese had set forward, upon the earliest May thaw, and reached the canton of Zurich, which had hospitably offered them an asylum.

This latest exile was now treading in their footsteps across the savage mountain passes, which are the sole avenues into Switzerland from Italy. He had gone through the Bernardin Pass, and was now approaching that most sublime of Alpine defiles—the Splugen.

Engineering has made all transits easy, now-a-days, and well nigh completely subjugated the world of matter to the world of motion. The traveller may drive in his carriage from end to end of the tremendous gorge of the Via Mala, the core of the Splugen ; and from his cushions and comforters leisurely survey the overwhelming sublimity of precipice and snow-peak. But our poor exiled student's journey was made before smooth parapeted roads had been carved along the sides of the stupendous rift a thousand feet above the raging young Rhine. He was obliged to scale crags and skirt chasms, and leap torrents, and otherwise comport himself, with an agility which would puzzle our modern traveller in a London-built britska : he had certain advantages over that comfortable traveller nevertheless ; for he could pause when he pleased, and he could select the finest points of view, had he been so minded, and stand still while the grandeur of nature entered and elevated his very soul.

Those precipices might be sixteen hundred feet high in some places : and down in their black depths thundered the aforesaid impatient Rhine, flashing whitely in cascades or plunging furiously athwart fathomless pools. Dark forests of fir

climbed the lower slopes and shelves of the split mountains wherever foot of tree could plant itself; sturdy large-limbed firs, accustomed to wrestling with tempests. And some of them in that wrestling had succumbed, and lay prostrate, flung down by strong invisible arms of the winds; others stood blasted on inaccessible heights, as if proving that the loftiest position is also the most perilous.

Francesco had never imagined anything more grand than this gorge. His heart expanded under a sense of the exceeding great power of his God, the Creator of “the strength of the hills.” Standing on the edge of the vast rift, while the surging of the imprisoned river came almost faintly from the far depths, he opened his lips in a song of praise. It was one of the hymns written by Antonio Brucioli, translator of the earliest Italian Bible from the Hebrew and Greek: a man not professedly Lutheran, yet persecuted as such; and his works ranked among prohibited books of the first class, by the Index Expurgatorius of the Council of Trent.

What was Francesco’s astonishment, as he paused after the first verse, to hear it taken up and repeated by some unknown voice not far distant! Echo was his first idea, but rejected instantly:

what echo could recite four lines of a hymn, with all variations of tune? Some Lutheran traveller like himself; and he peered about unavailingly, till the singer emerged at the corner of the path where it wound round a lichened crag.

“ My good friend Luigi Feo !”

“ Well met, signor ! and let me introduce to you my traveling companion, my little wife, Caterina.”

He had kept his word of returning so soon as the home was found for her; and the maiden, following the mysterious law coeval with creation, had left father and mother, and cleaved to her husband, even to a life-long exile.

“ You see, signor, I did not wait two months at Rogoreto with the rest of them; I was young and hardy, accustomed to the mountains, so I set out before the thaw,” said Luigi, “ and reached Zurich safely, where I found my knowledge of weaving silk so much in demand that very soon I had more employment than I could manage, and shall have the same now, when I return. I think, though, the little Caterina would sooner I had fixed to stay in Rogoreto among the Grisons—wouldst thou, anima mia ?”

And she answered dutifully what was the very

truth, that Luigi knew best, and that she was satisfied.

“Poor little heart ! the mountains frighten her and half the time she hath her eyes shut as the mule plods past the precipices,” observed her husband. “What a woman’s fears are, for a verity ! But thou art going to Zurich, signor ?”

Luigi was not quite sure that he would find the physician Di Montalto and his family before him ; when he left they had been speaking of returning into Italy and settling at Ferrara. This intelligence took Messer Francesco almost aback ; but as nothing certain was known of their movements, he concluded to go on to where they were last heard of.

“And now that I look at you, signor, you seem older and more worn than when I last saw your face among the Locarnese mountains. Ah, little thou knewest mine errand past the Red Cross that morning, Caterina ! This gentleman and I were taking care of the Signora Barbara ; but in very truth, signor, thou hast suffered since then !”

The young physician told of his imprisonment and torture in the Dominican convent ; little Caterina uttering all sorts of pitying exclamations, and once or twice beginning the usual appeal to

the saints or our Lady, until she met her husband's grave glance.

"My friend, I forget," she said to him, apologetically, twining her arm within his, as he stood. Her life's habit was not easily broken, though its substratum of blind belief was gone.

Luigi's brows knitted, and his black eyes flashed, to hear of the torture.

"If they had caught the signora, she would have lain on the same rack! We are well out of that land, Caterina; we go where they dare molest no man for his belief—where no shaveling friar durst show himself among a free people!" The good Luigi not perceiving that this last was intolerance even as the former—a shortness of sight common to his contemporaries.

By and by, when the toils of the way permitted further conversation, Francesco learned that old Ursula had died. In great remorse and unquietness of conscience, Caterina said, grasping the holy relic of the true cross even to the last.

"And it helped to show this little one," added Luigi, who seemed to consider himself necessarily his wife's spokesman—"it helped to show this little one, more than anything else, that the pope's religion is not God's religion, when nothing could

pacify the old woman's mind. No absolutions, nor rosaries, nor masses, gave her ease ; not even a letter of plenary indulgence itself, ratified by the archbishop and costing many golden scudi, was sufficient. And she called incessantly for her son Giovan—that was the last day, when her head wandered. He went to the wars some years ago, selling himself as a condottiero to the Emperor Charles ; and she called him to come and drive away with his sword the evil things that looked at her."

Lutheran as Luigi was, old habit inclined him much to cross himself at this juncture. Caterina shuddered.

"She always said she had helped to kill Nicolas, and would be the means of slaying you also, signor ; and not all Fra Pietro's preachings could persuade her that was a pious work. All the money she had she left to that shaveling knave to say masses for her soul, and she gave Caterina the blessed relic—the bit of the true cross—of inestimable value, they say !"

"Signor," began the young wife, a blush tinging her dark, rich cheek, " I now bethink me how Fra Pietro questioned me concerning the evening that thou didst pray beside old Ursula—I could not

know why he examined me so closely ; perchance it was to witness against thee, signor ; and he laid on me heavy penances."

" Which thou didst perform, like a little fool," cried Luigi, patting her cheek. " Well, never friar again shall dare hear the soul-secrets of wife of mine ! Of all the clever things invented by pope and cardinals, confession is the very cleverest. For don't you see, signor, it gets the key of the world through the women ! Do you think I'd tell my wife anything if she was to kneel next week at the ear of some double-dealing priest and tell it all back again ?"

Luigi's opinions had undergone considerable strengthening during his residence among the Lutherans at Zurich. He cast in his lot with the Reformed party by reason of the single point of truth which he clearly saw—Christ's power to save, above all saints, priests or popes ; and gradually he was advancing to see other truths, and to reason from them and concerning them with considerable homely good sense. Indeed the truth first received had embodied them all, as surely as blossoms in the sheath of a many-shafted lily ; their development might confidently be awaited. For that promise is of eternal fulfilment, " If any man will

do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

A part of the pass which suspended all conversation was before the travelers. This is the abyss entitled by the peasantry the Verlohren Loch, or Lost Gulf; a portion of the chasm impassable, until within the present century a tunnel was blasted through the overhanging mountain. Here our three wayfarers were compelled to make a long circuit over steep heights ere they could again descend the pass toward Tусis.

And here, once more in the grand gorge, a view of surpassing splendour opened before their eyes. Through the jaws of the dark ravine, as through a vista of perspective, were seen afar, sunlit lands; with the old Etruscan castle of Realt in the foreground, cresting a vast detached cliff, the warder of the mighty pass. It would have been easy to idealize that scene—something of the thought crossed Francesco's imagination. Behind, black precipices and gloomy caverns, a very land of the shadow of death, whence the Reformed were making their way slowly, painfully, through hosts of difficulties, to a fair, sunlit land of freedom and happiness.

"See, signor," observed the garrulous Luigi, "a

fair omen! The clouds are in the rear, the sunshine all before us!"

And with common consent the pilgrims took up again their hymn of praise.



CHAPTER XV.

THE ALTAR IN THE FOREIGN LAND.

FROM the village of Tisis, situate before the jaws of the mighty Splugen Pass, our travellers proceeded northward along the Rhine to Reichenau, and thence, still along the Rhine, but eastward, to Coire, capital of the Grison country. Now these Grisons had been most kind to the Locarnese exiles—had offered to them a permanent refuge, and admission into all the rights of citizenship, as if they had been born Switzers, instead of Italians. Nearly half the Protestants who had left Locarno were induced by these advantages to travel no farther, but to settle down in the Grison canton with their wives and families. And truly, even in this world, the hospitable Grisons had their reward. An infusion of the best new blood was thus poured into their state: industrious sinew and bone, intelligent heads and honest hearts, were added to the subjects of the League; and an

access of material prosperity was the result by the development of new trades and manufactures and the extension of the old.

Some of the indomitable Protestant spirit lingers still among the mountaineers of this region. There is a hamlet called Feldsberge, built in a perilous position beneath a mountain so perpendicular that its fall was expected, which would of course crush the village utterly. The inhabitants petitioned the authorities of a neighbouring commune for leave to migrate and settle in their territories; which was refused unless the Protestants of Feldsberg would become Roman Catholics. And the peasants preferred to abide the chance of burial alive under their overhanging mountain than to give up their older faith. All honour to their brave persistence! This occurred not so many years ago; and hitherto the threatening rocks have been upheld.

Francesco's haste to Zurich made him quite an impatient lingerer for a few days at Coire, even among his brethren, the Locarnese emigrants. Joyfully turning westward of Ragatz, through the beautiful vale of Scez, the glorious mountains again gathered round him at the "Wallenstatter," that grand Lake of Wallenstadt. Hard times

again for Caterina's mule, but no other pass like the Via Mala tried his sinews and her nerves.

Amid all the magnificence of the scenery, our pilgrims began to feel the sensations of exile. No flowing accents of sweet Italian greeted their ears at the inns, but rough, guttural German dialects, of which poor Caterina could not comprehend a syllable. The dress of the peasantry, their dwellings, the very vegetation of the earth, were all alien. Something of her loneliness she breathed to Luigi.

"Dear heart! our God will make a home for us; we shall learn to love these great mountains;" but an almost involuntary sigh escaped his own breast. "It is the will of the good God, little one; and heaven is as near Zurich as Locarno—ay, and a trifle nearer," he added, knitting his black brows. "See! the excellent signor hath gone on before to the point of the pass: methinks his heart outruns his steps to Zurich. Ah! I know what that feeling is, little one."

"But, Luigi," she said, "I hope the mountains are not so fierce about Zurich: I never could love them, I know. Our own beautiful lake was so gentle—the sunshine seemed to love it, and the rocks were not black and bristling like these."

“Well, thou wilt have a lake at Zurich, which is fair enough,” replied her husband. “The Switzers love it surpassingly. Behold! here are pilgrims bound for Our Lady of Einseidlen; they cross our path southward: her oratory is off there among the mountains.”

A number of men and women, walking in long files, telling their beads audibly, and some carrying huge waxen tapers for presentation at the shrine, chiefly peasants, who had left home and families and all the duties of their hardworked lives in order to fulfil a senseless vow of pilgrimage. Presently, through the murmur of paters and aves, a single rough voice began to chant—

“Ave, maris stella,
Dei mater alma,
Atque semper virgo,
Felix cœli porta !”

and twenty other voices took up the strain, hailing Mary “Star of the Sea, Mother of God, Gate of heaven!” In the next verse they besought her to pardon all their sins; and so marched away through the valley, to the burden of a song as idolatrous as ever ancient Helvetian uttered before pagan deity.

Perhaps Caterina felt some wrenchings of the

old creed at her heart as she listened to the rude melody of that well-known hymn winding away among the mountains. Luigi looked at her earnestly; he divined the feeling.

“Little one! It is for love of me, and not of God’s truth, that thou has left father, mother and native land. But I will pray that thou mayest love the blessed Jesus more than thou lovest me, dear heart! I will read to thee from the Book, Caterina, that the divine flame may light into thy soul and fill thee with joy, and enable thee to cast off the chains of the pope’s religion for evermore. For dost thou not see that thou art in chains as long as thou hast a dread of God?—the God who is loving thee; and popes and priests like men to have such a terror; for then they are driven to seek access through them, which puts money into the Church’s purse, and power into the Church’s hands.”

The Italian girl listened, with her large, dovelike eyes fixed on her husband, thinking in her simple heart how clever he was, but not able quite to follow his ideas. “I cannot help going back to the old religion sometimes,” she said; “but you will teach me better, Luigi—I have no head for these things.”

“ ‘Tis not head that God wants, but heart, little one. Pray to him to make it clear to thee how that the blessed Christ has redeemed thee, and that thou needest to do nothing further but believe: thou needest not penances, nor absolutions, nor pilgrimages, nor aught else, but only to trust in him.”

And Luigi walked silently at the head of her mule for a long distance, until they came in sight of the blue Zurich See, lying tranquilly among verdant hills, which were crested with snowy peaks rising behind afar off. Their road lay through the old fortified town of Rapperschwyl, on the edge of the lake; whence was twenty miles to the city of their destination.

A month before, when the great body of the Locarnese exiles approached Zurich, with one consent the inhabitants came forth to meet them and embrace the sufferers as dear brethren, and give them house-room and heart-room. What a strange old world scene! One would like to have looked on it, and brought away the lesson, “See how these Christians love one another!” The strong, simple-hearted Protestantism of the age was most earnest in its sense of brotherhood, and of its duties toward the household of faith, even to self-

sacrifice. We trust that in our more complicated and refined state of society the feeling is only latent, not deadened. For truly the closest bond that can unite human beings, whether singly or in masses, is the community of conversion to God; all other ties are without the man, are perishable with this world's ending at furthest; but this single bond clasps soul to soul, and is eternal as heaven.

Francesco pressed forward to the city in early morning. Noon was shining on the wide waters when he first beheld the amphitheatre of heights circling Zurich: well-cultured hills, bearing rich pastures and farmsteads—a populous and peaceful province, doubly grateful to the eye after the savage scenery he had passed through. The tiled roofs and church-steeple of the town nestled to the water's edge, after the manner of most lake cities; that ancient cathedral of the tenth century crowned all, and the white peaks of the Albis culminated the view.

“What ho, Peppi!” this to a man who was travelling along before him at a rapid rate. “Dost not know thy friends?” when he paused and started.

“The Signor Altieri! Nay, but we had given

thee up for lost;" and the men shook hands heartily. "Thou hast escaped then? I give thee joyous welcome to the land of freedom."

"But what of Di Montalto, the physician? Is he in Zurich?"

"Methinks he is now in the new church which the senate have given us, listening to Fra Bernardin, our pastor, who is installed to-day."

"Not Bernardin Ochino, the celebrated general of the Capuchins?" said Francesco.

"The same. He has been in Basle since he fled from England, and was invited to be our chaplain, after Beccaria; a most eloquent friar they say, and one sound in the faith. I was hastening but now to hear him."

"Then I will speed with thee;" and they mended their pace toward the gates of the town, Francesco's spirits having risen considerably to find that his patron and, by probable consequence, his patron's family were still in Zurich. As they walked along the refugee told the young physician various circumstances of interest connected with the exiles: the brotherly welcome they had received in Zwingli's city, the efforts made to procure them occupation, and many domestic particulars with which this narrative has naught to do.

Passing through the quaint, steep-roofed streets, they found themselves presently standing amid the listening crowd in the vestibule of the Locarnese church. The good Zurichers had flocked in numbers to behold the inauguration of this fiery Capuchin friar, who had endured so much for the faith, and whose zeal was unquenchable by the bitterest persecution. True, few of them could understand the tide of burning language which flowed from his lips and flooded the hearts of the exiles with passionate emotion. Francesco could hear that great glowing voice where he stood near the street entrance. He wondered whether the Signora Bianca was listening to it likewise.

But presently the marvellous ardour and eloquence of the preacher seized his whole attention and held it riveted. His subject was evidently justification by faith, the mighty doctrine which had first given quietness to his own restless, seething soul. These were some of Ochino's words :

“ How is it possible that a man by his own exertions can make atonement for his immeasurable sinfulness ? Would it not be as if a dead man should attempt to call himself back to life ? Christ by no means said to the chief ruler of the synagogue, Do thou perform thy part of the atonement,

and I will fill up what is wanting. Nay, he said, 'Only believe!' It was human righteousness that crucified Christ; and how can we ascribe to *it* the power of justifying and blessing mankind? Look to the thief who was affixed to the accursed tree along with Christ, and tell me, I pray you, what good did he ever do that he should hear from Christ those words, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise?' You say, perhaps, he suffered stripes and the cross. Ah! were he to die a thousand times over, he could not give satisfaction to divine justice. If you should say he was saved by a miracle, I tell you that it is by an equal miracle, and by the singular mercy of God, that any of us will be saved." *

Some movement in the crowd enabled Francesco to advance nearer, so that presently he had a view of the speaker. A tall, spare, worn form, the hair and beard white as a snowdrift, the last flowing even to his girdle; but in the midst of his pallid face glowed most searching eyes, whence one could have fancied the glitter of flint-sparks when the excitement of the man's spirit rose high.

Francesco cast one rapid glance round the build-

* Extracted from a sermon of his, translated into Latin, from Italian, by Secundo Curiöne.

ing for his friends, but could not see them. They were perchance in the galleries overhead. Again he was borne away on the preacher's words :

“ Let not any man imagine that we are thus justified by Christ simply as an intercessor—because he asks God the Father for remission of our sins. My friend, you omit the divinest thing of all ! For Christ hath transferred our sins to himself, and desired that they be ascribed to him, out of his great kindness. And not only did he accept them as if he who was free from all shadow of blame had committed them, but he suffered the most agonizing death to satisfy divine justice. He gave unto us his innocence, his holiness, nay his very spirit and soul, to animate our souls, to enable us to call God our Father ; before whom we may stand boldly, uncontaminated by even the shadow of a sin. We are utterly free from our old sins, because Christ has made them his own, and has given us his purity, that we may appear lovely before God. But this immortal treasure depends upon one faith, one strong and certain persuasion, which is only to be received from God.

“ And why should I detain you longer ? Whoever is justified in this manner may stand before God's tribunal with that security wherewith Christ

himself doth stand. As Jacob was received by his father instead of Esau, from wearing his brother's garments, so are we clothed with Christ, and with his ornaments beautified. God will receive us as sons, and give us a portion in his everlasting kingdom."



CHAPTER XVI.

FRA BERNARDIN.

ENGLISH words can render the main matter of Ochino's sermons, but not the full force or delicacy of meaning; nor can the fervid accents, the impassioned gestures of this most celebrated preacher of the Italian Reformation be reproduced across the ages for our appreciation. Suffice it to say, that among his contemporaries he was renowned for "extraordinary eloquence," and that Cardinal Caraffa, mourning his defection from the Roman faith, wrote of him thus: "Ah, Bernardino! how great wert thou in the eyes of all men! Thy coarse cap excelled the pope's mitre; thy deep poverty, the riches of the world. Thou wert the very herald of the Highest, full of wisdom and adorned with knowledge; the Lord placed thee in his holy mount as a light, as the sun of the people, as a pillar in his temple, as a watchman in his vineyard." And when the emperor

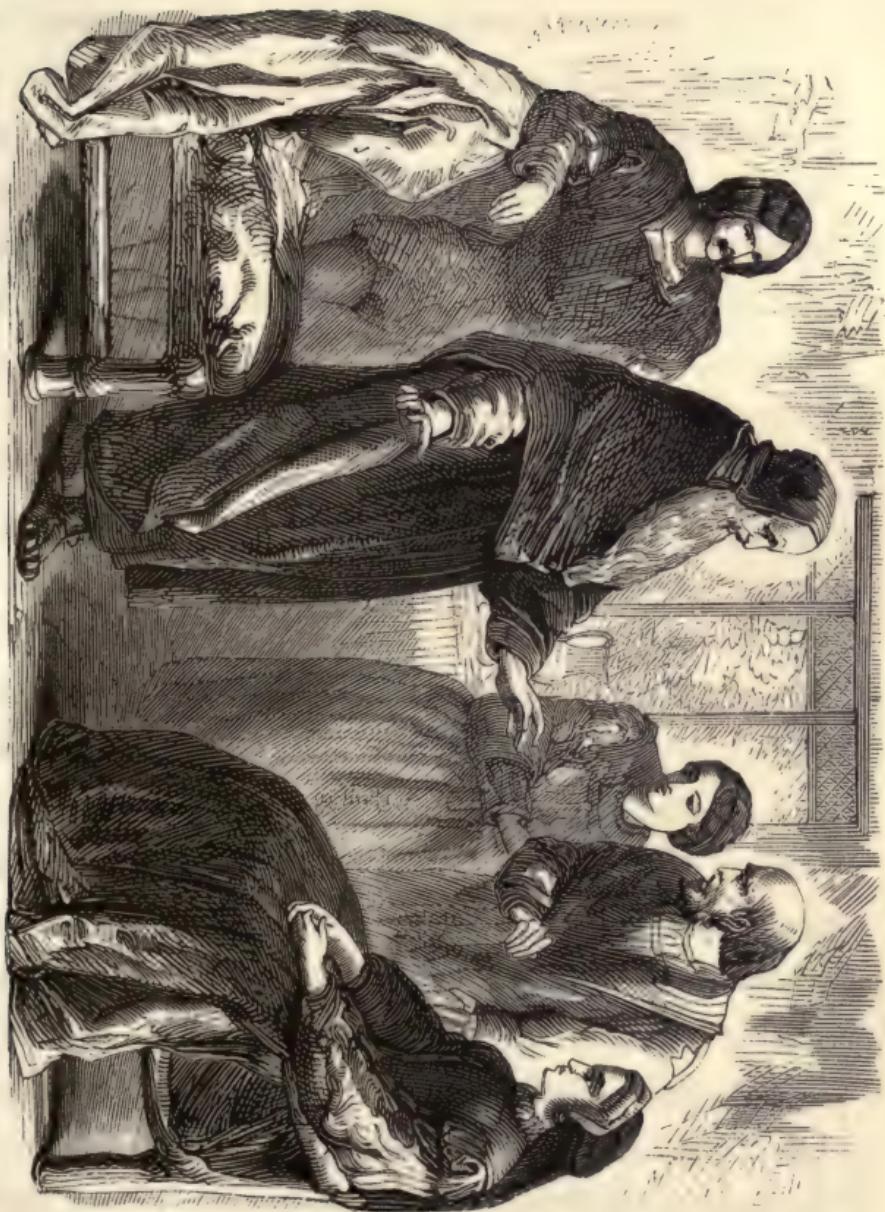
Charles the Fifth heard him preach, he exclaimed, “That man would make the very stones weep !”

He had been twice general of the order of Capuchins, and bid fair for a cardinal’s hat. Now, for conscience’ sake, he was the persecuted pastor of a congregation of exiled Italians, and all prospects of earthly honour were closed to the heretic. Ochino thought that he had chosen the best part.

In the evening, when young Altieri was sitting at supper with Di Montalto and his family, the new pastor entered. The nobility of his presence struck Francesco even more than it had done from the pulpit.

“My friend, hearing that thou art going back to our poor Italy, I bethought me that I might be of some service to thee with such friends as yet remember the name of Fra Bernardin,” he said, addressing the elder physician. “So if I can do aught for thee in letters of introduction, or such like, I pray thee to command me, brother.”

“I think of going to Ferrara,” replied Di Montalto, passing his hand across his bearded chin in a furtive manner and with look askance. The truth was, that he had no desire to distinguish himself in Italy by adherence to the Reformed party, but meant to take a middle course, in which he had



already proved that no safety rested. He would as soon be without Ochino's introductions.

“Ferrara! Ah, that was once a blessed city!” said the ex-Capuchin—“a light to the dark places of Lombardy. And still there are precious souls there—God’s hidden ones; above all, the noble Duchess Renée, though she hath appeared, of late, to fall from the truth.”

“It was my privilege to know her Excellency,” said the Signora Barbara, “and to receive much benefit from her teaching in my youth. I could scarce believe that she would recant the convictions of her soul.”

“Ah!” observed Ochino, “the heart is weak and our deadly enemy is strong.”

“But Christ is stronger,” exclaimed the physician’s wife.

“True, my sister, most true; yet even a Peter failed in the hour of bearing witness,” replied the deep tones of the pastor. “Not unto all men is martyr’s grace given;” and Francesco remembered the account he had heard of Ochino’s own flight from Florence to Geneva—not a flight connected with any dishonour or cowardice, but simply a withdrawal from the face of death in its most fearful form.

“But it is better to fly than to desert to the enemy,” remarked Francesco when he perceived the glittering eye Ochino fixed upon him.

“Thou hast borne scars in the cause likewise, if I am told rightly concerning thee, my young brother,” said the ex-Capuchin. “I hear that already thou hast suffered at Locarno for the name of Jesus. Thou hast the honour of early graduating in Christ’s college of trial. I would fain learn how it was, brother.” So Francesco for the second time narrated the main facts of his arrest, imprisonment and torture. He fancied that the Signorina Bianca shuddered and grew paler as he just touched on those terrible hours spent upon the rack; but then she would compassionate anybody, her nature was so kind.

“Ah!” exclaimed Ochino, rousing himself from the sort of reverie in which he had hearkened, “we have seen but the prelude of the martyrdoms in our poor Italy. I know the Cardinal Caraffa well—he who last month assumed the tiara under the name of Paul the Fourth; no sterner bigot ever wore the purple! He is one that in slaying Christ’s servants will think he doeth God service. Not that he is without noble qualities; in purity of life he yields to none, and in singleness of aim.

He is a man of one idea, and that idea—the dominance of the Catholic Church."

"Yet he once belonged to that saintly society 'the Oratory of Divine Love,' with Sadolet and Thiene—who, they say, is fit for canonization—and the noble Contarini."

"Ay, well mayest thou say 'the noble Contarini!'" echoed Ochino, his piercing eye softening at recollection of his friend. "That gentle soul suffers no more contradiction of unrighteous men; he hath passed to heaven before the evil days. Never did the scarlet hat rest on a worthier or more unworldly head. In very truth he was too guileless for this age of hypocrisy and state craft. His dream was the reformation of the Church by the agency of her own sons stripping off her meretricious adornment; but God chose to reform her by a disruption of the very foundations of her throne; and when Contarini saw that she would still clasp all her filthy rags and false jewelry to her heart, and would not be purified, the idea of his life was gone; he had but to die. And he died, believing in Christ only, justified by his righteousness only. I saw him at Bologna shortly before he yielded up the ghost, and he found this faith sufficient for that hour of fear."

A few moments' pause and the physician's wife gently remarked, "From the conclave to the peasant's cot Christ's truth hath witnesses throughout all Italy."

"Yet, mark me," the monk rose as one inspired; "it will not prevail! The agencies of evil are too many and too active. Methinks it is not God's purpose to bless our poor Italy with a free gospel. She is trampling out the spark of light most vehemently, and she will suffer through centuries to come—centuries of chained consciences and of fettered liberties—for her present rejection of her Lord!"

"But the Duchess Renée surely hath some power in Ferrara still?" quoth the physician, who had been thinking over his worldly prospects, and had heard little of the foregoing conversation. Bending an anxious gaze on Ochino, he repeated his interrogative remark.

"As a daughter of France she must always wield influence even over the despotic Ercole, her unworthy husband. I doubt if there could be a safer retreat for the Reformed in Italy, except indeed among the Waldense colonies in Calabria, far south."

"A pastoral people," said the physician, "and I

am accustomed to the life of cities. I love not the stagnation of the country. I seek to live an honest, quiet life, as folks led before these new opinions came to overturn the world. Why cannot men believe what they choose, and make no noise about it?" added Di Montalto, testily. "The world would be so much happier."

"And, my friend, what of the next world? Would that not be so much the unhappier?" asked Ochino. "Time-serving is one of the devil's delusions. Did Christ make a pleasant home for himself on earth? Then how can we, his followers, nestle ourselves down in the comforts and pleasures of time?"

But Di Montalto would not be lifted out of his dissatisfaction. Fra Bernardin's keen wits had little difficulty in reading the inner man. "My friend," he said, "beware that the wings of thy soul become not clogged with earthly dross, which will prevent thy rising into the heavens when thy call comes."

"Thou wert speaking of the present pope," interposed Francesco, willing to divert his attention. Ochino saw the object and humoured it. Before wife and daughter he could not rebuke father. "Is he not a very aged man, and may not deliver-

ance from his bigotry arise by the shortness of his reign?"

"His years may be nine-and-seventy," replied Ochino. "He is hale and healthy as thou art. He has been grand inquisitor, whence thou mayest judge of his mind toward the Reformed. He helped to found the order of Theatines; whence judge of his ascetic devotion. He will be for purging the Church, but only after his own manner. His first bull proclaimed reform for the Roman court and the hierarchy. The very day of his coronation he sent monks into Spain to restore the discipline of convents there. Our latest news speaks of a congregation of cardinals and prelates established for purposes of general reform. There is no mightier proof of the conquests of Lutheranism than the election of such a pope. Alexander and Leo would not have dreamed of this forty years ago."

"But it is merely a lopping off disfiguring excrescences," said the young man; "all Rome's soul-destroying delusions remain; she is still a Church of works and not of faith. What avails it that an ecclesiastical government is pure when it saves not souls?"

"Rome is the wicked Antichrist," affirmed

Ochino. “There can be no compromise with her, for she is founded on the one huge lie that man’s own doings can make him acceptable to the holy Lord God. Many years was I myself in thraldom to that yoke. I sought by fastings, prayers, abstinence, watchings, afflictions of the flesh, to purchase heaven, and make satisfaction for my sins through the concurring grace of God. Therefore I joined the order of Franciscan Observants, as the most austere of all regulars; therefore I further joined the more rigid Capuchins, when I beheld their still severer ritual, which commanded midnight prayers, weeks of silence, personal discipline from sackcloth and scourge. And then I said to Christ, ‘Lord, if I am not saved now, I know nothing more that I can do!’ Still was my heart dark and wretched. I was a stranger to true peace of mind until in the sacred Scriptures Christ showed me his great righteousness as enough for me and all mankind. It was as if the sun had arisen over a cold, dark world. Thenceforth my soul was glad and strong.”

“I suppose,” remarked Francesco, “that most of those who come out from Rome have a similar struggle of human works against divine faith. I have heard my excellent uncle, Baldassare Altieri

of Venice, speak of his own emancipation from the false faith in words like those, but he never took the monk's frock."

"And thou art so close of kin to that worthiest of Venetian confessors?" said Ochino. "Then suffering for Christ's cause is in some measure thine heritage. How noble that declaration of his to Bullinger by letter! I have seen it under his own hand: 'Having given myself to Christ, I chose exile rather than to enjoy pleasant Venice;' and he hath since been wandering about with his wife and boy in want and trouble, sealing his faith verily with a painful life. Has aught been heard of him lately, knowest thou?"

"Alas!" said Francesco, "we fear he hath fallen into the hands of his adversaries; but I purpose a journey to Venice, where live my nearest of kin, and I shall make inquiry concerning him."

"Be not rash, my son, when thou approachest the stronghold of the wicked one," said Ochino, after a pause of steadfast regard. "Thy body as well as thy soul belongs to Christ, and must be preserved for his service. Yet flinch not should the hour of trial come, for he can give strength for any endurance. And now methinks we have spoken long enough of things pertaining to this

passing world ; let us raise our thoughts to heavenly places in Christ. What sayest thou, my young brother?"

And Fra Bernardin drew a book from his long, loose sleeve, opened it at John's Gospel, and read.



CHAPTER XVII.

A DAUGHTER OF FRANCE.

SEVEN miles circuit of walls, set in vast marshes along the curve of a turbid, sluggish river, which is probably given to overflow, for high embankments shut it in. A network of similar embankments cross country wherever a stream creeps through the rich black soil, and between the most fertile fields in North Italy. Maize and millet and rice grow luxuriantly whenever the desolation of war sweeps not over the plain with destructive blast. But no peasant was quite sure of his harvest anywhere near the Lombardian battle-ground of kings during the sixteenth century. Everybody lived in an uncertain, disquieted way, even when men were honest burghers and dwelt under guard so efficient as the above seven miles of wall.

Within, long lines of handsome, spacious streets, radiate to the central heart of the place—a moated

castle of ponderous red masonry. Plenty of marble-fronted palazzi intersperse those busy streets, richly carved in pilaster and façade, yet with iron-stanchioned windows, strangely suggestive of an insecure state of society. The piazza contains a fine old cathedral, and is overlooked by the aforesaid huge castle, yet with a deep broad fosse between—an unwitting symbol of the chasm between the common life of the people and their prince, over which may sometimes be flung the drawbridge of necessity or of policy, only to be lifted away again when the urgency is past, and leave the despot isolated as before.

Such were Ferrara and her surroundings, as they appeared to the newly-arrived from Switzerland in the autumn of the year 1555. Such in outline is Ferrara still. The great skeleton city remains, though the informing life has departed. It now resembles one of the gaunt suits of armour set up in our museums—a shape over a hollowness. The rich marshes along the sluggish river give off as much malaria as harvest, owing to bad tillage and drainage. The spacious streets are muffled with grass and weeds, and, for the most part, are silent as Tadmor in the wilderness. The sculptured palazzos survive, great stranded monsters of

the aristocratic age, sometimes housing a colony of *canaille* instead of the blue-blooded counts and cavaliers of their original; but still is the conveniently situated castle true to its duty, as resident of the spider who watches this web—no longer one of the ducal line of Este, but a frocked churchman deputed by Ferrara's late lord pope, or perchance, at the present date, a green-coated Sardinian officer.

But we have to do with “la gran Donna di Po,” as Tassoni terms it, in the era of her greatness, while yet a native prince sat in the huge red castle, with a daughter of France for his spouse. Then were the streets and squares abundantly animate; commerce and manufactures were carried on to some considerable extent, fleets of trading-boats voyaged on the Po; the university boasted dozens of learned professors occupying all sorts of chairs, and mentally ministering to hundreds of students. Duke Ercole was esteemed a well-conditioned prince, as princes went in his time; that is to say, he would now be considered an intolerable tyrant, and probably meet the fate of the recent king of Naples; but the standard of princely character was low in Italy of the sixteenth century—much lower than that required in their subjects. A little cru-

elty, a little license, were reckoned trivial blemishes, especially if a ruler were orthodox.

That Ercole the Second was orthodox he had given many convincing proofs. Had he not inaugurated the martyr crusade in Italy by the burning of Faventino Fannio, of Faenza, a young man of blameless life, but of heretical opinions? Had he not established a college for the new order of Jesuits, and taken one of their number to be his confessor? Above all, had he not forced his wife, the daughter of Louis XII. of France, to recant her heresies, under the potent influence of solitary confinement in the Cavallo chambers of his grim old castle, where deprivation of her children's company, an absence of all comforts of books and friends, and a dread of still further extremities, in short space brought her to declare that she believed what all men knew that she did not believe? Who could doubt that Duke Ercole was a favourite son of the Church after such signal achievements?

True, he never could quite cleanse the precincts of his palace from heretical taints. In whatever guise of sophistry the Duchess Renée reconciled her conscience to the recantation aforesaid, she in reality yielded none of her obnoxious Protestant opinions. The barest conformity was her con-

cession to the Roman ritual; and somehow or other none of her chosen companions, none of her immediate household, were what might be called good Catholics. The confessor Pelle-tario was wont to tease Duke Ercole on this head, more than on his small offences of cruelty and license above alluded to; but with no tangible result, for the duchess had acquired worldly wisdom, and gave no tangible offence. Besides, there were limits to the persecution that could be brought to bear on a daughter of France.

But would it not have been happier for Renée to have been more straightforward in her conduct? That defection of hers has been a scandal to the Church through the centuries since, and was a stumbling-block to many a feeble Christian during her own time. Perhaps it is the consciousness of this consequence with casts such a shadow over her large open brow as we behold her sitting in an apartment of the huge red castle one autumn morning, engaged with her women at embroidery. Her pale, plain face bends over the work, into which she is weaving golden threads; but her thoughts are evidently not absorbed by the rich tissue in her fingers. On the marble slab near her is lying an open volume—Thomas á Kempis'

great work “On the Imitation of Christ.” Perhaps she is thinking how weakly she has failed in following him.

Out of sight, in the pockets of that stiff brocade dress, which rustles with every movement, she carries a little book which she deems yet more precious than a Kempis. It is a small swart volume meanly bound, fitter in aspect for a poor scholar than a duchess ; and as she presently draws it forth and turns over the closely-printed leaves, covered with the beautiful black typography of the age, we read the title, “Trattato utilissimo del beneficio de Gesu Cristo crucifisso, verso i Cristiani”—“A most useful tract concerning the benefits which Christ crucified giveth unto Christians”—by a learned professor of Siena, named Aonio Paleario. Verily a proscribed book, containing heresy enough to infect a province, the approval and circulation of which, some years afterward, helped to procure the imprisonment of the virtuous Cardinal Morme and the burning of Carnesecchi ; for it clearly set forth, as Paleario himself testified, “that those who turn with their souls to Christ crucified, commit themselves to him by faith and cleave to him with assured confidence, are delivered from all evil and enjoy full pardon

of their sins. And since he in whom the Divinity resided has poured out his life's blood so willingly for our salvation, we ought not to doubt of his good-will, but may promise ourselves the greatest tranquillity and peace.”*

These glorious doctrines—now, thank God ! the heritage of every English cottager in our free land —were a stolen luxury to this royal duchess. Her heart was soothed as she read, the contracted lines on her forehead smoothed away under the influence of happier thoughts. A page entered and announced a visitor.

One of Renée's favourite learned men ; a Greek professor named Franciscus Portus in the Latinized speech of the day, but a Candian by birth, and more than suspected of the new heresy.

Renée led the way to a deep bay-windowed recess, which looked out on the brimming canal or moat encircling the castle ; beyond were the quaint, crowded tenements of old Ferrara. Here they could speak without being overheard by her ladies.

“ I have brought to your Excellence the promised sonnets of the most noble the Marchesa di Pescara, the ‘divine Colonna,’ as scholars delight

* Extracted from Paleario's defence, pronounced before the senate of Siena.

to call her," said Portus, after some opening conversation. "Truly for purity of idiom and beauty of conceits there hath not arisen her like since Petrarch's lyre is dumb."

"But I wonder," quoth Renée, turning over the thin volume, for her soul needed something better than literary conceits just then—"I wonder if she hath expressed any of her religious feelings here. I have seen sonnets wherein her words had scarce an uncertain sound. Oh for the old days when we both hearkened with delight to the good Frate Bernardin Ochino preaching in our cathedral on the piazza, ere yet the ferocious Inquisition shut the word of God from our people!"

The wary professor glanced across his shoulder, but the three attendants were tranquilly embroidering, as their mistress had left them.

"All 'novatori,' as our Reformed are styled," said the duchess, answering the gesture. "Moreover, we are too distant to be overheard. My friend, believe me that I have learned to be cautious."

"If your excellent Highness will permit me," said Portus, colouring slightly, "I will show you certain in this collection of sonnets which prove that the marchesa still retains the truth, howso-

ever her utterance of it be straitened. What think you of these lines against Rome's most powerful engine of craft—the confessional?" He read for the duchess the sonnet whose ending runs briefly thus in English prose:—

"Passing beyond the priestly gown,
To Christ alone we tell our every sin."

"Methinks," added the professor, "that verse bears not indistinct meaning."

"Many a minor heretic has been burnt for less," said the lady, glancing through the short poem a second time. "Poor Vittoria! she was very near the kingdom of God—that kingdom which I have entered, and seemed to betray," added Renée in her own heart. "Yet can I not serve the good cause better as I stand in my royal estate than if I were captive in a dungeon?"

Portus respected her momentary reverie, and spoke not till she looked up:

"Another sonnet, your Highness, and one of the Colonna's best, sets forth plainly the Reformed doctrines of instant conversion and justification, without any agency of Church or ceremony—a truth surely most distasteful to Rome, as striking at the very root of her dominion. The marchesa affirms

that the miraculous light from heaven hath molten the ice round her heart, hath caused the dark mantle of her sin to fall away, and hath discovered her robed in primal innocence and primal love!"

Renée smiled, and Nature, as if to compensate for her homely features, had bestowed on her a smile of rare sweetness. Well had she known the sensation which that sonnet recorded; the purest of all joys granted to human souls—conscious conversion to God. And she remembered that no vivid metaphor, nor impassioned eloquence of words, could exaggerate the glory of that light from heaven or the deliverance from that dark vesture of sin.

"But she writes only of primal innocence," observed the duchess, when Portus had finished reading the graceful fourteen lines. "She speaks not of Christ's righteousness; and evil were it for us if we had not justification through him, as well as sanctification through the Divine Spirit."

"Most noble lady, the marchesa has—not forgotten," cried the professor, who did not like the smallest blemish to be found in the compositions of this literary idol, for such was Vittoria Colonna during her brilliant lifetime. "Hearken to these lines :

‘Fear not, poor soul: into this world has come
Jesus, great ocean of eternal good;
He will make light for thee each heaviest load.’

Or these other lines,” and Portus turned the pages rapidly :

‘He who alone on Christ hath fixed his gaze—
Not who best understands, or studies best
With human learnings—shall be blest in heaven.’”

“Yes,” observed the duchess, “that is ring of the true metal. My good Portus, I thank you for your trouble in procuring me this book. And now about the signora concerning whom you spoke to me formerly?”

“I crave your Highness’ pardon,” said the professor, hurriedly, “but the Signora di Montalto hath been waiting in the ante-chamber till it should be your pleasure to admit her to audience. I—I—your Highness knows my absent disposition, especially when a matter of learning is in hand.”

“It were well that the fault could be remedied, my friend,” replied Renée, gently, when he stumbled in his excuses. “It were hardly courteous to leave the lady—an old acquaintance, too—so long waiting. But you have something further to say, monsieur?”

“A moment: I would beseech your Highness

to permit that I should introduce to you the noble Count Galeazzo Caraccioli, eldest son of the Marquis di Vico, who is travelling to Geneva, and is under persecution for the gospel's sake. The noble gentleman is lodging at my poor house for the present."

"We will receive him; but the Signora di Montalto cometh first," said the duchess briefly, and rising. Now, when Renée stood, the natural deformity of her figure became manifest: attitudes of sitting might conceal the crookedness. Another of the crosses in her apparently brilliant lot was this personal uncouthness, and the worse was it because it alienated from her the regards of her husband. Ercole the Second would never have cast into solitary confinement a wife whom he really loved.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE AUDIENCE.

THE Signora di Montalto had begun to be seriously uneasy for her expected reception before the forgetful Portus reappeared. The windows of the ante-chamber looked upon a narrow alley floored with a canal of deep, dark water; for the huge red castle is intersected with canals, which flow beneath archways and between lofty piles of building; and the dungeons underneath—oh, what noisome and slimy recesses of unclean things! Barbara could not help thinking of the dungeons as she glanced downward at that dull, blinking water.

But up here in the royal rooms, all high and dry, are walls panelled with paintings, and ceilings emblazoned, and ponderous inlaid furniture, and beaufets ten or twelve feet high, in the banqueting-hall, loaded with silver plate, and the sleeping-chambers contain beds curtained with crimson satin, adorned with massive gold fringe. This ante-room, where Barbara di Montalto has been wait-

ing for so long, is lined with sets of stamped leather hangings, of the valuable “ostrich-egg” pattern ; vast settees, immovable as stone benches, extend in various lengths along the sides. A couple of richly-dressed pages lounge near the door opening on the grand staircase.

“The court is much gayer,” quoth one lad, “since the return of the Prince Alfonso ; but I fear me he hath brought with him some of the hatred against the Protestants which ‘our cousin Henry of France’ shows so plentifully. He goes with the duke in everything.”

“His sister of Guise has been giving him some lessons, I trow,” rejoined the other. “Besides, don’t you see, ‘tis easy for us to talk, and for her Highness, who won’t have to handle halbert ; but we lie too close to Rome here, and that fiery old Paul the Fourth would swoop down upon Ferrara like a kite on a capon if the duke didn’t give him at least fair words.”

Conversation of this sort did not tend to reassure the already downcast spirit of the physician’s wife. And so much depended on this interview ! so many hopes had been built on it ! Two anxious hearts waiting at home, drearily waiting, looking out for her ere now—what if she could only

bring them disappointment? And then she tried to stay her soul on the great ultimate thought—the will of God, which must be good and wise for all who put their trust in him: she tried to leave on him her care, knowing that he had permitted this evil of exile to befall them. Yes, come what might, she would not lose hope in him.

When the professor entered from the duchess' saloon, Barbara almost expected to hear that her request for an audience was refused: she had learned something of Renée's position, and the extreme caution which that royal lady was compelled to observe in her encouragement of the Reformed. It was therefore a joyful surprise when Portus, drawing his cloak about him, whispered,

“The most illustrious duchess will receive you: enter at once. I go for the Count Caraccioli, of whom I told you: addio.”

With a beating heart the physician's wife entered Renée's presence. She was standing still in the recessed window, looking forth on the slumbering moat and its brown shadows. Quickly turning at the slight sound of the footstep, she looked piercingly on Barbara who knelt, according to usage, and kissed the sovereign hand.

“Thou art not so much changed by time and

matronhood," said the duchess, "but that I would know thee to be the daughter of Bianca Dalfi—a lady for whom in verity we had much esteem and regard, and whom the princesses still remember with affection. Therefore thou art welcome to Ferrara, and to such poor help as may lie in our present favour."

The physician's wife again kissed the sovereign's hand with fervour, and tears rose in her eyes. "Your Highness is too good," she said, falteringly, for the graciousness had been more than she had dared to hope during the last dreary hour.

"Portus has told me somewhat of you," added the duchess, "and that you approved yourself a good soldier of Jesus Christ before the papal nuncio at Locarno. You have been braver than I, good Barbara," continued Renée, with a touching humility: "you stood firm where I failed: the scholar hath indeed excelled the teacher!"

"Most illustrious lady," began Di Montalto's wife, rather confounded by this unexpected allusion to Renée's public defection from the faith. She sought for some courtly words which might gloss over that great error, but truth compelled her to be silent.

"Thou doest well not to strive for excuse," ob-

served the duchess, with a shade of bitterness in her tone. “But let that pass. Tell me—when wert thou last at this court of ours?”

“Twenty years agone, most noble lady, since the spring when the Signor Carlos Heppeville so-journed in this castle,” was the reply.

“Ah! the great John Calvin, as he is called in our native land,” observed the duchess. “A powerful and weighty preacher as ever wielded God’s word to the confusion of error: he had just at that time printed his ‘Institutes of the Christian Religion,’ dedicated to our royal brother-in-law Francis: we remember it well. Ah! the light of truth was rising fairly over our poor Italy in that year! but since it hath been as a morning overcast with cloud and storm.”

A few brief moments’ pause, while Renée’s mind travelled quickly back over that gulf of twenty years to the days of her youth, when fair children clustered about her knees, nor had yet been taught to regard their mother’s instructions as contamination: Anna d’Este, now unhappily wife to Duke Francis of Guise, then learning Scripture from her lips, with the self-willed heir-apparent Alfonso: oh for those happy times of love and trust and unsullied truth! Other figures rose in

the camera-obscura of memory: the sweet, grave face of Madame de Soubise, governante of Renée's childhood, to whom she owed her first glimpses of Reformed faith; the learned canon Calcagnini, who was the earliest asserter in that age of the schoolboy truism of the earth's rotation on its axis; the strange and versatile Clement Marot, her secretary and laureate, who cultivated poetry and theology by turns, enjoying the sentimental beauty of Scripture truth, but having no root of the matter in him. These, and many others, all passed away! The followers of Christ's gospel skulking in holes and corners of the Ferrarese territory—herself first among renegades! The duchess heaved a deep sigh, and returned to the widely different present time.

“I had forgotten,” said the physician’s wife, timidly—“I had wellnigh forgotten to give your Excellence a letter from the Frate Ochino, wherewith he entrusted me when we were leaving Zurich.”

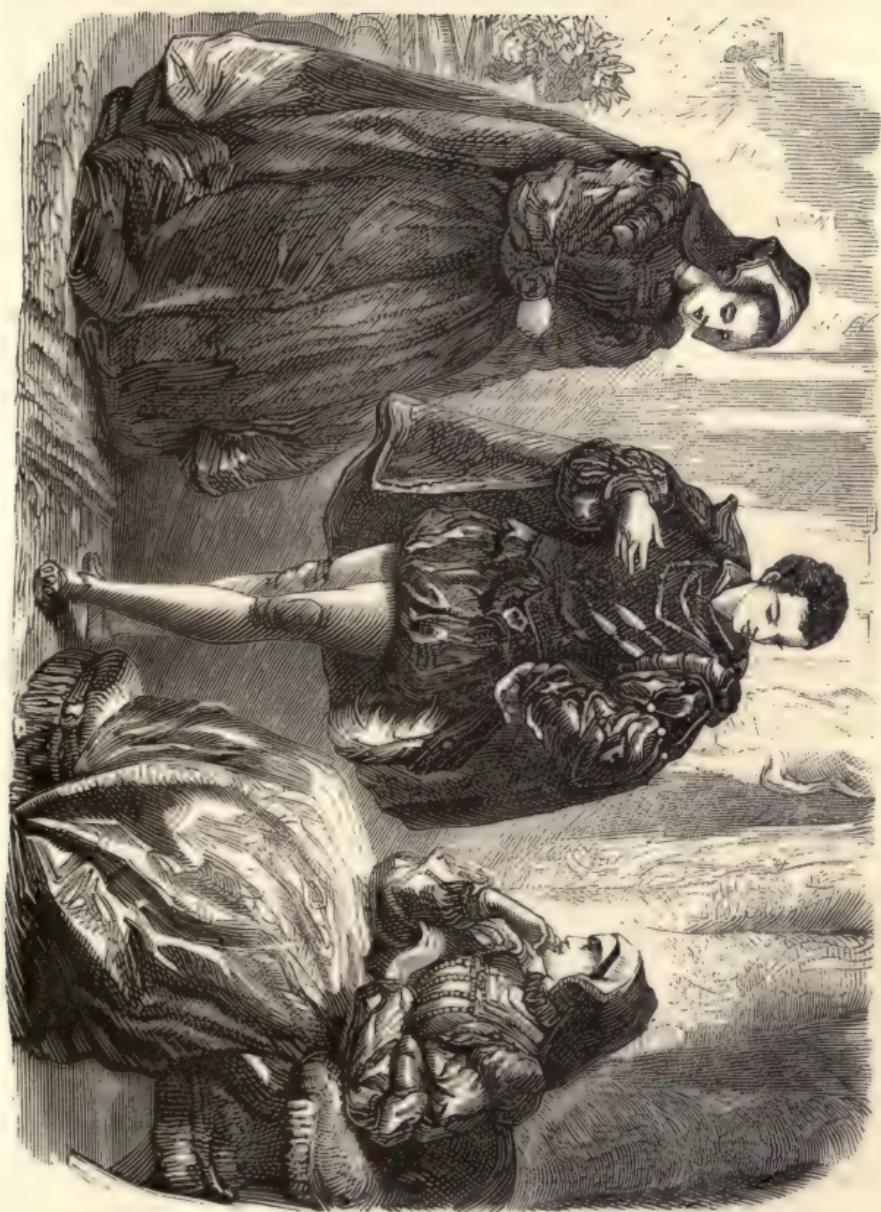
At the close of faithful counsels to the lady’s self (and so plain-spoken were those counsels that even the gentle Renée’s brow contracted while reading them) the former general of the Capuchins mentioned somewhat of the physician Di Mon-

talto's desire to settle and follow his profession in Ferrara, under the powerful protection of her most serene Highness.

“He overrates my power,” said the duchess, sadly. “I, who cannot protect my ownself from imprisonment, am scarce likely to be able to protect others. But the post of second physician to our household may soon be vacant, for the present holder thereof seeks for a chair of medicine at Padua; if he succeed, then the Sieur di Montalto may reckon on our favour. Nay, no thanks; are we not commanded, above all others, to assist the household of faith?”

Renée pronounced these words, and indeed all which bore reference to her proscribed opinions, in a lower tone. As she had ended, some bustle in the ante-chamber, audible even at this far end of the inner apartment, announced an arrival of importance. The heavy door was swung aside by the page to its fullest width, and his “most illustrious Highness il Principe Luigi” was announced.

The duchess' pale face, which for an instant had worn an expression of anxiety and unpleasing expectation—had she not feared the entrance of her despotic lord, Erecole the Second?—lighted up as if a sunbeam had glanced across her as the





gallant-looking young prince bent knee and kissed her hand, such courtly deference did the manners of the age require between the best-loving parent and child. But the next instant he was clasped in her arms, and stooping his tall figure, pressed his lips on her brow affectionately.

“I could not go on the hawking-party without seeing thee, dear mother,” he whispered. “I have been at my books all the morning—my father saith I shall be a premature churchman: truly I delight more in them than in falcon and hound; but he sent to demand my presence on this ride, so I obey.”

It was the blessed golden thread of domestic peace in Renée’s life, the possession of this virtuous and dutiful son. Called at the font after his grandfather, Louis XII., the “Father of his People,” she had often prayed that in goodness he might resemble that kindly monarch; and the prayer was granted, for even under the cardinal’s red hat, which he wore in after years, Luigi d’Este was honourably known for his great virtues.

“And thou hast not looked at my brave attire, my lady mother,” said he, drawing himself up with a smile: “the handsomest doublet in all Ferrara, be the other what it may. Methought,”

he added, saucily, “the woman’s eye would spy out the finery in a moment!”

Of Genoa velvet, slashed in the sleeves so as to show the white linen beneath, and embroidered with dead gold, it became the lithe figure well; and the close-fitting, purplish-gray hosen, reaching from hip to heel, set off his shapely limbs. From his hand dangled a black velvet cap, adorned with a flowing ostrich plume of the purest white.

“Thou art well dressed, my dearest,” replied the mother, her eye wandering with an instant’s pride over the well-loved form: “but I trust”—and here Renée’s voice again dropped to the heretical whisper—“I trust that thou hast fairer adornments than these in the sight of thy God, my Luigi.”

The winding of bugles was heard without.

“Well, mother mine, when I am pontiff thine innocent little heresy shall not be disturbed—you have my episcopal word for it. I am sure that faith cannot be bad which makes you so much better than anybody else; though I was forgetting—you are as orthodox as any of us since Pelletario heard your confession. I must be gone, or those horns will be hoarse and his most serene Highness in a rage.”

And the brilliant hawking-party rode over the

castle drawbridge, and across the thronged piazza ; foremost “ the fine presence ” and commanding port of Ercole the Second, with his fair youngest son riding at his right hand. Merry jest and laugh resounded among the richly-dressed cavaliers and dames who followed the sovereign’s steps on jennet and palfrey ; while the poor, hard-working lieges, in hempen attire, looked at the courtly array as at some glimpse of a grandeur immeasurably above them—as much above their lowly spheres of labour and of need as the ponderous red castle is above the fruit-booths in the subject piazza.

Not twenty minutes after the ducal cavalcade has glittered by a woman in common black mantle and tunic comes over the same drawbridge, and through the same thronged market-place, bearing in her heart more genuine happiness than the most envied individual of that brilliant hawking-party. Indeed Barbara di Montalto feels as though her cup of joy were running over ; for it is a very little temporal delight that, added to a heart already endued with the love of our dear Saviour, will suffice to fill it to the brim with happiness. What a value is added to the commonest events, the humblest joys and successes of human life, if the Almighty Friend stand consciously by, blessing them all !

CHAPTER XIX.

FERRARESE INTERIORS.

IT is Christmastide in Ferrara. All the broad-paved throughfares are full of fluctuating crowds, swaying to and fro at church archways, flowing along beneath the heavy-corniced palaces and beside great grim monasteries, bound on that mixed medley of business, pleasure and devotion which forms a Roman holiday.

Enter these vast ecclesiastical buildings, and see the religion of the multitude embodied in wax or marble—in endless groups of the predominant Mother and her subject Child. Behold the cupola of burnished gold above her head, her throne of lapis-lazuli, her robes of the gaudiest and costliest tissues inwrought with precious stone. The holy Child is quite subordinate, both in the image and in the worship it calls forth. Again, pass into the next sanctuary among the surging crowd trampling the mosaic pavement between dim marble columns ; gaze at the treasures this day bared to popular view—a dusky antique picture of the same holy

woman (in sooth, not fair to view, but stern enough for a sphinx), with golden lamps burning continually before the flattened features, and golden angels holding up the frame. St. Luke is believed to have been the painter of the representation thus glorified. Votive offerings of jewels and cups and chalices lie before it. A neighbour church has no such transcendent attraction, but the wits of the brotherhood which own it have devised a very taking exhibition to draw some custom to their booth. This is none else than an accurate model of the Bethlehem stable, including the manger, the cattle, waxen figures of Joseph and Mary, and—wonderful to relate!—a tiny clothes-horse holding still tinier baby linen of cambric and lace! This exhibition particularly pleased the women and children, who were not soon tired of admiring the miniature waxen Mother and her infant Son, but, above all, the domestic drapery attendant. Why the dazzling high altar, with curtains of rose-coloured silk looped up to its snowy pillars, with its tall crosses of many-hued flowers, with its galaxy of gold and silver vessels flashing back the brilliance of a hundred tapers, was no attraction compared with the tiny clothes-horse!

Then there was no end of processions, music,

chanted litanies ; long files of tapers winding round the aisles, dropping wax as they went on the mosaic ; priests and friars in all sorts of garments, from violet silk and lace to the dun serge and rope. The religion of scenic effect was perfect.

Yet not all in Ferrara bowed down before it. A little band of obscure Christians lurked in by-streets, who dared to withdraw themselves from the universal popular homage, and who found not food for devotion in pictures, chantings and wax-lights. Nay, even the noble army of martyrs had gained recruits from among them. Fannio had led the van of the Italian contingent gradually ascending in fiery chariots to join that mighty army in heaven. Death, torture, banishment had greatly lessened the once flourishing Reformed Church in Ferrara ; and perhaps the sorest blow of all was struck by the hand of a real friend when the Duchess Renée bowed in the Romish confessional and publicly received the Roman eucharist.

And so, this Christmas time of 1555, the religion of scenic effect was in full swing at Ferrara, in full favour at court and with the people. Our few obscure “heretics” hid themselves, and were satisfied to retain their lives and daily bread if possible. Particularly softly did the physician Di Montaldo

walk, as a man wise in his generation, as a child whose fingers have been burned. "All things to all men" was a text which he admired much, and applied in practice according to his own theory of its meaning. He had no mind to suffer any further for conscience' sake. He would sail with the tide, but he fondly hoped to be able to port helm and shift yards before coming to the breakers. Had he not a mental reservation of belief? Could any one really blame him for bowing his head before St. Luke's blackened picture, when in his heart he knew it a hideous imposition, though it would cost him his life to say as much? He reasoned that the philosophic deceit was necessary —"Evil that good might come."

The young girl clasping his arm through all the crowds never made a semblance of obeisance at any shrine. The very multitude was her safety in this daring disobedience. Drawing her wimple about her face with one hand, she clung to her father with the other, noting with her bright eyes the theatrical decorations, the religious jewelry, the toy-shop models, and having some scorn for them all; also noting the hurried gestures which were deemed devotion, the rapid signing of the cross, mutterings with the lips while the eyes wandered in quick

glances at one's neighbours, and the facile knee bent for a few seconds before an image. A good deal of this was new to Bianca. She had been reared in the lap of the Reformation by an enlightened mother, and the thick darkness of Italian popery came upon her with unpleasant surprise. She had gone to none of the festas in Locarno. Her father occasionally went, true to his trimming policy, and now in Ferrara he insisted on her accompanying him. What comparisons to the pure worship of the Reformers were made by that pretty, well-balanced head, veiled with the dark wimple! How much worthier of the Supreme appeared the spirit-adoration of a renewed heart, clothed in fervid utterance of the common tongue, than these prolonged Latin chantings, these meaningless genuflexions. How incomparably more exalted one of Savonarola's or Brucioli's hymns than these litanies and rosaries replete with nomenclature.

She was glad when the tour of the churches was over and she entered the narrow, quaint street where she was to join her mother and friends at supper. Her father did not speak for some minutes after they had left the crowds behind. She felt that he was displeased.

“A tolerable religion this of yours,” he observed at last, “which allows you to disobey your parent and run him into danger. But I warn you, Mistress Bianca. Your mother has drawn on me the loss of all my property, and left me a pauper in my gray hairs, and I have no mind to lose my life for sake of your obstinacy next.”

“Father, what can I do?” said Bianca, with a sinking heart.

“Just what the Duchess Renée has done, like a sensible woman. Keep your opinions as you choose, but don’t obtrude them. Everybody knows that she has not really given up one iota of her faith, and that her confessing to Fra Pelletario was a mere form, gone through for peace’ sake. But see what she has gained by it! I wish your mother would follow her example, that’s all, and not run my neck into danger by headstrong zeal. It is little more than three years since Giorgio Siculo, a most learned man, was found hanging before the windows of that Palazzo della Ragione on charge of heresy.” Di Montaldo shuddered as he glanced at the great marble pile, the upper stories of which passed on high into the dark air far above. Not far away was the spot where had stood the stake of Fannio; and an under-sound,

pervading the hum of populous streets, was the splash and lapse of that turbid river which had borne the martyr's ashes to the sea. Ferrara had corners, dowered with associations, sufficient to make a nervous man, suspected of heresy, tremble in his shoes.

He left his daughter on the high steps of the house of the *Madonna Morata*, and passed along deeper into the labyrinth of streets himself.

“My father—who used to be so kind, so good—how strangely altered!” thought *Bianca*. “My dear father! his soul is bitter with poverty—God show him the true riches!”

Within a low, wide room, rather bleak-looking—for in Italian houses of the middle classes of that period little provision for winter comfort existed—three women were sitting at work. *Bianca*'s mother we readily recognize by the bold, dauntless features, which yet have enough of feminine softness, chastened by trial; beside her is a worn-looking woman, with pale anxious face, now bent over repairs of house-linen, but more often laying down her needle in the earnestness of conversation. This was the dame *Lucrezia Morata*, described by contemporaries as “a model of matronly and domestic virtue, and who proved by her

conduct in times of trial and persecution that she was also endowed with strength of mind and genuine religious principle."

The third is a fair young matron, scarce past the bloom of girlhood: her distaff and spindle are busy. Bianca is received with much welcome—with more demonstrations of it from the strangers than from the parent; but the eye of this last follows her and rests on her when the politeness of the others had ceased, and notes a certain weariness in her expression. She is able to guess the cause, and says nothing. Work was found for Bianca on some of the house-linen—such hard, heavy linen as no loom produces now, each web of which might last a lifetime and form an item in a legacy.

The younger women naturally draw together and converse in low tones. Between them, in matters mental, lies one great gulf. Morata's daughter has been trained, as became the sister of the celebrated Olympia, to a considerable knowledge of classic learning. Latin iambics and Greek hexameters are familiar to her, while Bianca knows no more of the dead languages than a few grammar lessons from Francesco Altieri have left in her memory. Consequently she looks with respectful admiration on the other, for the height of

education in that age was to construct Latin verses fluently and to translate the Psalms of David into Greek odes.

But not on such learned topics do they talk this evening. The signorina, who has been visiting the churches, relates their scenic shows, and the signora, who has stayed at home, admires or condemns as the narrative requires.

“But, my Bianca,” the young matron says, with the slightest of sly looks, “how would a friend of ours who has gone into the Venetian territories approve of this manner of spending Christmas eve?”

“I don’t suppose he would approve of it at all,” replies the other, colouring deeply despite her quiet tone; “but you know that I do not owe him obedience—until—” And here some intricacy in the damsel’s work requires her to look very closely at it indeed.

“Well done, my transparent Bianca,” cries her mischievous friend. “Until when do you intend to disobey this young signor?”

“I mean,” said the other, “that—that it is my certain duty to obey my father.” An appealing look was turned upon Peregrina, with the words, “You know it is my duty to obey my father, and he required me to go with him to see the sights.”

“Whether such bowing in the house of Rimmon is allowable even to the plea of filial obedience,” remarked Peregrina, rather pedantically, but relapsing into seriousness, “I have not made up my mind, though I rather think that sophistry alone can justify it.”

“But, my Peregrina, I did not bow,” pleaded Bianca; “I merely looked. I have come back, as I always do, tenfold a Lutheran. Such ceremonies and splendours don’t now attract me in the least.”

“Because you have a Northern imagination. They are only suited for our warm Southerns,” responded Peregrina. “Now they attract me strongly. I own to an admiration for the music, the lights, the crowds, the rich colouring; therefore there’s some merit in my abstinence.”

“Well,” said Bianca, “what I think about these shows and ceremonies is, that when the most gracious Lord has truly enlightened one’s soul, and revealed his own salvation by the indwelling of the Divine Spirit, then one sees the popular religion to be dishonouring to him, and that an idolatry of the Virgin and the saints has supplanted true spiritual worship of Christ our Saviour. It is not so, dear friend?”

“Truly,” said Peregrina. “It hath often struck

me when reading the poets and historians of old Rome. Thou knowest somewhat of those great luminaries of the mind, my Bianca?"

"Nay, scarce anything," said Di Montalto's daughter, humbly, and feeling herself only fit for house-linen.

"Well, it hath come forcibly to my thought that the numerous saints of our modern Rome do strongly resemble the gods and goddesses of the old Pantheon in pagan times. The Virgin is worshipped in the very shrines of Diana and of Venus; she is called the queen of heaven, like Juno. Minor divinities have quite withdrawn worship from the Supreme; every village hath its local saint, successor of the tutelary god of the Romans."

"Peregrina," called her mother across the table, "find for me in the second oaken chest that Sapphic ode, written by our Olympia when she was but in her twelfth year. Ah! how entranced was the canon Calcagnini over it! Methinks I behold her now in fair white vesture reciting her verses for her father's learned friends, conversing with them in Latin as fluently as in Italian, while they marvelled at her acquirements. Ah me, those happy days!"

The poor widow leaned back in her chair, and a natural tear welled down the faded cheek. But present exigencies brought back her wandering regrets, as the returning needs of daily life do always, in God's wise providence, recall from sorrow.

“Peregrina, go thou and see after the supper; that service-maid is dilatory.” So the youthful matron obediently rose a second time to carry out her mother's behest. Filial submission was in that age considered to extend through life, and no altering of position or circumstances could release from such duty. The dame Lucrezia ordered about her daughter (though married for some time to a Milanese signor of good means) as if she had been yet a school-girl.

Rice, with milk of almonds and dried figs, fish cooked with wine and spices, were the items of fare this evening at the Italians' great daily meal of supper, for it was the vigil of a festival. The table now only awaited the arrival of the Milanese signor and of Di Montaldo.

CHAPTER XX.

“OUR OLYMPIA.”

THE massive oaken chest had accordingly been opened, whose lid was all heavily carved in basso-relievo: and a treasury of a few valuable books (relics of the late professor's library) and priceless papers revealed. Examine the former, chiefly delicate editions of the classics from the Venetian press of the famous typographer Aldus: hold the latter up to the light, and you will find the orthodox watermark of the crossed keys on its coarsely wired surface. Early scribblings of the gifted Olympia's hand, translations of Italian fables into Latin (bearing date of an age when our degenerate children toil through monosyllabic spelling-books of their mother tongue), attempts at Greek composition of an equally premature season; some few finished poems, which showed an astonishing command over the resources of an extinct language: these were the proud mother's choice possessions, showed out daintily while the women waited for their lords.

“ And my little Emilio was treading in her steps, bless his heart ! He’s hardly the little Emilio now, but growing apace, she tells me, and making progress in all polite learning under her instruction. She hath had him to train from the cradle —he numbered but five years when his poor father died ; and she would take him to Schweinfurth with her when she was married.”

“ You said she dwells at Heidelberg now ?” remarked the other matron.

“ Yes, Grünthler has got the chair of medicine at the university ; and our Olympia might be attached to the elector’s court, an she but willed it. Methinks her spirits have never recovered that fearful siege of Schweinfurth, when she and her husband lost everything ; and her health has never been the same. Would that I could see her once more ! They have asked us to go and live in Germany with them, but travelling is so uncertain in these warlike times for women. Olympia calleth Italy Babylon, and would have us leave it at all hazards ; but I love Ferrara, and my son-in-law could not withdraw himself from his properties ; he is well to do, as thou knowest, Dame Barbara, and asked no dowry with my Peregrina. And I hear enough of tumults on the other side of the

Alps likewise; the emperor will fight with the electors, and keep Germany in a broil. Mine elder daughter Vittoria is well settled with the Princess Lavinia della Rovere, in Rome, who was a special friend of our Olympia, and favoured her when even the Duchess Renée was turned against her by the arts of that Carmelite Bolsec. For I am convinced it was all his fault," said the poor mother, to whom the machinations of a court and the whims of royal personages were inexplicable. "As almoner he had the ear of her Excellence, and was a most pestilent knave, and hated the influence of our Olympia over the princesses."

"But I have heard you say yourself, my friend," interposed the physician's wife, "that her disgrace at court was the first thing which drove her soul to the blessed Christ; and if this be so, it were not a misfortune to her best interests."

"Oh, truly it was the neglect of her great friends which turned her heart to God," replied the mother. "During her years at court, when she was feted, admired, caressed beyond example by the noble and the learned, she was indeed a good and a worthy daughter; but the Greek and Latin authors had filled her mind with heathen lore so much that she might nigh as well have

been a pagan maiden of Tully's time, for all the Christian faith and hope that was in her soul. She knew not the grace of God as a living principle: she had heard Fra Bernardin Ochino, whose eloquence would move the very angels; yet his sermons only were to her as the music of a sweet player, passing away when the sound was over. Her brain was indeed filled with curious speculations as to election, predestination and the like class of doctrine, with which, as my poor Fulvio Morata used to say, she too much occupied the intellect to the neglect of the practical culture of the heart. But when the blessed Lord spake to her himself by troublous dispensations, and brought the dark cloud of sorrow and poverty over her life, she was humbled and hearkened unto him; and I have heard her bless the day that her life at court ended. Therefore she careth not to be the electress's lady-in-waiting now. See what her letter saith — this letter which my daughter Vittoria sent to me to read some time since."

There was a very small bundle of them, these precious letters: not so many received during the four years' absence as you, my young lady readers, probably have in your desk from a fortnight's correspondence. But in the sixteenth century days

of scant and slow communication, an epistle was a large event to both sender and receiver: it was no ephemeral production, to be tossed aside when glanced over, but rather in the nature of an important despatch, to be laid up carefully after every word was weighed.

“ ‘Tis many a month since we heard from our Olympia—ah! my friend, there was a time when all Ferrara proudly styled her ‘our Olympia?’ Do I not remember her”—and the mother pulled down again the cumbrous, jointed spectacles through she was about to scan the letter—“do I not remember her in her fifteenth year, declaiming publicly in Latin and Greek before the whole court and university, explaining the paradoxes of the greatest orators, answering every question addressed to her? and all with so much modesty and grace that she won the affection as well as the admiration of her hearers! Ah, those were halcyon days!” exclaimed the widow, looking back with pardonable elation on the triumph of her child. “ How proud was her poor father! for her learning was his work. Many a bitter day of penury and exile did he spend in laying foundation for her fame: and truly her like was seen in no age since the Augustan.”

With a sigh the faded woman closed that bright page of her memory, and pushed up the clumsy spectacles again to read a duskier page of later date. Her greatest pleasure was to talk of the old laurel-crowned times: and a curious struggle existed between her worldly pride in these remembrances and her consciousness that the present obscurity of Olympia's life, away in Germany married to a poor physician, was best both for her temporal and eternal happiness.

These were some extracts from the cherished letter, after an account of the siege of Schweinfurth and her husband's settlement as professor in Heidelberg:

“In England also I hear that the pious are much afflicted” (written in 1554, when Mary Tudor had commenced lighting the Smithfield fires), “so that whoever wishes to be a Christian must bear with him his cross in all places. Indeed, I would rather endure any evils in the cause of Christ than possess the whole world without him: nor do I desire anything more than him. One thing I implore, that God may bestow on me constancy and faith, even unto the end: I continually pour out my soul to him; nor is it in vain, for I feel myself so strengthened and supported

that I would not yield even a hair's breadth in his cause. . . . My sister, I again beseech you to have more fear of that Being who by a word created the universe than of powerless creatures of clay, or of the aspect of this world, whether threatening or smiling."

Few knew more of it in both aspects than the gifted writer. Her letter ended with the commendation, "Farewell, and *overcome*, my dearest Vittoria!" Verily Olympia was changed since her days of declaiming before the Ferrarese court, when the turning of a Greek strophe was her chief object in life. She had made the glorious discovery that the foolishness of Christ's gospel was nobler than the wisdom of the world.

The widow's thoughts had sundry times wandered from even these precious letters and remains to her waiting supper, as testified by various interjections with reference to the delay of the honourable signors they expected. Before long these last arrived. Di Montalto looked brighter than usual. An envoy from the palace had sought him, and formally presented him with the place of second physician to the ducal household.

"Ah, thou seest the Duchess Renée did not forget," exclaimed his wife. "Her protection avail-

eth much even yet ; and she is so kind, so good !” For every one knew that Renée’s benefactions to the poor and afflicted were of unexampled generosity ; and that even at the matter of gifts her kind nature did not stop, but was always planning for their benefit in other ways.

“ And I also have news for thee, madonna,” said Dame Lucrezia’s son-in-law, “ at least whatever tidings is contained in that,” laying before her a slight packet wound round with silken thread. “ A messenger from Lucca, bringing advices to the Jew banker in the Piazza, brought that among them.”

It contained money sent by the beloved Olympia, gathered from her poor income at Heidelberg, and remitted to one Thomas of Lucca for behoof of her mother. The said Jew banker would pay gold-pieces to the order which Dame Lucrezia Morata was to present him with. And a short letter in the dear, beautiful handwriting, accompanied the filial tribute—a letter which she was afraid might fall into unkindly hands, the wording was so cautious, and no friend specially mentioned. She was aware that the mere name of one so celebrated for persistent heresy as herself might draw on the correspondent trouble from the Inquisition.

The floodgates of the poor mother's heart were opened afresh ; and glad tears wetted the short, vague, constrained note which Olympia's hand had touched. Ah ! could she have seen the vacant, desolate home at Heidelberg this very Christmas eve ! Could she have seen the heart-broken husband of her adored child going about his duties mechanically through a plague-stricken city, and with the seeds of death lodged already in his frame ; turning ofttimes into the graveyard of St. Peter's church, where lay buried the remains of her who was his very life of life ! A merciful veil of time and distance hung between the bereaved mother and that reality.

But thus was it torn away. Olympia died in October ; and such was the slowness of communication in those days, such also the unwillingness of friends in Germany to impart the sad news, that up to the middle of January, 1556, it had not reached Ferrara. Then, came the fatal missive from Bâle.

Some speculation took place before the sheet was opened as to whose writing addressed the exterior. It was not Andreas Grünthler's, and certainly not Olympia's own. Peregrina, looking over her mother's shoulder, read the uppermost line of the letter as follows :

"Celio Secondo Curione, to the most excellent dame Lucrezia Morata, wisheth health."

"Ah, dear mother, thou seest how needless was thy fear!" she said, with a caress. "A letter from my father's oldest friend, the professor of Roman eloquence at Bâle University: perchance he hath some studentship for our Emilio, or hath late tidings of our Olympia. Read, dear mother, read."

"If I have seldom written to you, Lucrezia," so ran the letter—"you whom I cherish as a sister—you must regard it as a sad effect of the disturbances of our time, and not as flowing from forgetfulness of your former kindness. I shall always remember the good offices which you rendered me during the life of your husband Fulvio, when your house was my asylum."

"Ay, ay," said the widow, "but my poor Fulvio was kind to him; though he considered it only the discharge of a debt, since from Curione he had learned the Reformed faith when in exile at Vercelli before you were born, child. And that time, when the pope threatened to excommunicate the University of Pavia on his account, he had to fly to Venice, and thence here. I remember my Fulvio's letter inviting him, as if it was written yesterday; and our Oylmpia was then but a grow-

ing girl, beautiful and learned beyond her years ; and Curione taught her much."

Then came fresh reminiscences of that period of Olympia's glory—the noontide splendour to which the poor widow so often reverted, as the eyes of a person who has passed from light into obscurity love to gaze back at a former brilliance on his path.

"But, dear mother, wilt thou not read ?" said the half-impatient Peregrina.

What gloom of foreboding, inexplicable save by the mysterious intimations which we sometimes seem to have of approaching calamity, grew over the mother and daughter even before that letter was perused ? Curione went on to narrate some of Olympia's trials and difficulties, merging thence into a reflection on the fleeting nature of all earthly joys ; contrasting them with the fixed and perfect glories of the eternal life laid up in heaven, which is the perpetual aspiration and earnest desire of the Christian soul. It had been Olympia's often-expressed and fervent wish to depart and be with Christ her Redeemer.

Peregrina need scarce have read further, but the next lines told how the dear, suffering Olympia had gained her highest bliss. "God has taken

her from the arms of the tenderest husband, and permitted her peacefully to depart to heaven ; has transported her into his glory, where only is happiness worthy of the name—that happiness which she always desired.”

Not for days afterward could the poor mother receive the sequel of the consolation which Curione had penned. How cold and measured were the warmest words of sympathy in the bitter hour of bereavement !

“ If we think only of ourselves,” he wrote, “ we cannot be too much afflicted at having lost her ; but if we compare the felicity she enjoys with the miseries of this life, we shall find cause for thankfulness as well as consolation. The Olympia whom we loved is not dead : she lives with Jesus Christ, happy and immortal ; after the storms of her earthly destiny she dwells safe in the haven of an eternal repose !”

Her poor husband had requested of Curione, as one who loved and valued the gifted dead, and who was intimately acquainted with the whole family, to break the sad tidings to her mother. His letter is a model of its kind for caution, and tenderness, and piety. It arrived in Ferrara much about the time that the heart-broken husband of Olympia

and her young brother Emilio lay dead together of the plague in Heidelberg.

Thus one of the brightest stars sparkling in the dawn of the Italian Reformation set to the earthly horizon, only to shine in a more glorious firmament for ever and ever.



CHAPTER XXI

THE RENEGADE MONK,

THE Reformed party in Ferrara dared not worship openly at this period. Upper chambers and subterranean vaults were their cathedrals—the place of gathering changed each meeting for greater security; for the argus-eyed Inquisition was abroad.

None of our safe English Sabbaths for these pioneers of Italian Reformation, but a skulking through by-places at early or late hours, with a consciousness that every man's hand was against them, and that the forbidden luxury of united prayer might be paid for with their lives. Would our churches be crowded if such were the terms of fellowship? It is good sometimes to glance back at the dark places of the past, and contrast other men's privations with our privileges, purchased for us through blood and fire in these same years 1555-'56.

Let us visit one of these dangerous gatherings, which the archbishop of the Ferrarese diocese

knows well to exist, though he cannot lay his crosier thereon to crush them, for want of definite information. Spies are dispersed everywhere, commissioned traitors empowered to scent out heresy anyhow, to work into unsuspecting confidences, to assume any character, to commit any baseness, so only they bring fuel to the fires of the Holy Office. Many an incautious speaker has thus been haled to prison, and many a heedless liver, who neglected the sacrament of penance, been stimulated to fulfilment of a duty so dangerous when left undone; and many who felt themselves unsound in theology have fled to territories where the argus eye is not quite so penetrating; for some have been tortured, some banished, some put to death, by the sacred tribunal, acting on the information of its flying squadron of spies. The external uniformity of Ferrarese faith is quite edifying of late.

But, not a bowshot from the sumptuous Basilica del Spirito Santo—all whose bells are ringing forth this noontide, and priests crowding about its various altars, clothed in purple and fine linen—within the unacknowledged sanctuary of a humble room, two or three are met together in the name of Christ. Very apostolic is the danger and the obscurity of their assemblage. These tasteless

sectaries have passed by the great folding doors of the basilica, whence issue faint odours of perfumed incense and full echoes of most harmonious chanted masses ; and have chosen, instead of that rich ritual, the unadorned speaking, the fervid supplication, the reading from a Bible in common words, which are the sole forms of devotion in their heretic meetings. Raise their voices in a hymn they dare not. But He who stood in the midst of the gathered apostles when “the doors were shut for fear of the Jews,” was surely present in this perilous place of prayer, breathing on his servants the priceless gift of the Holy Ghost.

Truly were the inspired words here fulfilled : “Not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” Poor and unattractive were the few who held fast through much tribulation, and counted the reproach of Christ better than the world’s smiles. A renegade monk was to preach, who had lately escaped from prison at Bologna, and was hiding in Duke Ercole’s territories. A beaten, hunted man he looked, but vehement with the enthusiasm of persecution ; his eye had an almost startling glare — perhaps from having for months viewed the blazing pile of martyrdom not a day’s length away in possibility. Asetic and haggard in his coun-

tenance, and his words weighty, drawn from the depths of a rare experience of suffering and of spiritual support.

The old doctrine he chooses to discourse upon, the key-note of the Reformation—justification by faith in Christ's merits only. Twice it has nigh cost the intrepid monk his life; and so it is most dear to him, as an imperilled treasure is cherished by men specially.

Afterward he gives to the little audience, who drink in his words with eager ears—no listless attention there, good reader! no wandering thoughts or abstracted eyes!—the renegade monk gives them some account of the Church of God in Bologna, whence he has just escaped. Ten years ago it numbered many thousand converts, including some of the highest names at the university. The disturbance had begun by the Minorite friar Mollio's lectures on the Epistles of Paul; for which the said friar was cited to Rome, and defended himself so ably that the judges appointed by Pope Paul III. to try him were forced to acquit him of the charge of heresy, declaring that the doctrines he taught were true, though not such as could be publicly promulgated without injury to the apostolic see! for before Romish error was irrevocably

fixed by the canons of the Council of Trent, some latitude of belief was permitted in theory ; at least, a loophole of escape might thus be open to the accused.

“ Ah ! woe is me,” said our monk further, “ that I stood beside the same Frate Giovanni Mollo before the congregation of the Holy Office in Rome, and that I witnessed his good confession, without sharing it ! For tremours of the flesh came over me, and my heart sank from the long imprisonment in noisome dungeons, and I was not clear in the truth then, as I am now ; and the evil one whispered to me of the agonies of death and the sweetness of life. I was among those that recanted,” added the monk in a lower tone, and drooping his head with abasement. “ Only two stood firm of all who held the death-torches in that dismal procession. The Frate Giovanni had leave to speak to his articles of accusation ; they hoped he would have given them the triumph of yielding ; but no : he defended his heresies most boldly, no whit abashed by the six illustrious cardinals and the episcopal assessors. Nay, he even declared the power of the pope to be antichristian, and derived from the devil. ‘ If you cardinals and bishops,’ said he, holding the torch aloft—‘ if

your power was from God, then your doctrine and life would resemble those of the apostles. But now your Church is a receptacle of thieves and a den of robbers, overspread everywhere with falsehood and profaneness. Your great object is to seize and amass wealth by every species of injustice and cruelty. You thirst without ceasing for the blood of the saints. Can you be the successors of the holy apostles, the vicars of Jesus Christ—you who despise Christ and his word, who act as if you did not believe there is a God in heaven, who persecute to the death his faithful ministers?"

A low, deep hum of approbation from the audience, whose eyes were sparkling assent to these daring sentiments of the martyr. The monk paused, that the effervescence might for the moment subside:

"Dear brethren and sisters in the Lord, I had not strength to follow that noble example; for which I do most heartily repent, seeing that I should now have entered upon that eternal joy which the good Frate Giovanni has these two years experienced in the presence of the most blessed Christ and his angels. *Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!* I am not worthy to minister unto the Church of the most high God. But further,

the Frate said words like these; for I was by holding my torch while he spoke: 'I appeal from your sentence, O cruel tyrants and murderers! I summon you to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ at the last day, and answer for your deeds where your pompous titles and gorgeous trappings will not dazzle us, nor your guards and tortures terrify us! And in testimony take back what you have given me;' herewith he flung the flaming torch on the ground and extinguished it. The cardinals ordered him and another who was equally steadfast instantly to the fire; and so he entered heaven that same day from the Campo del Fior."

With breathless interest had the narrative been followed by the hearers. It was a case which might any day be theirs; no old-world story, looked back to from a safe distance of centuries, but duplicate transactions were each week taking place throughout Italy. The professor Franciscus Portus, who was present, had known the Minorite Mollo as a celebrated teacher in the universities of Milan and Pavia, as well as of Bologna; he had read his commentary on Genesis, which was composed while in prison at Rome.

"My brother," said the professor, rising and lay-

ing his hand on the monk's shoulder, "not to every man is martyr's grace given. Thou hast done well to confess thy fault, and the gracious Lord has surely forgiven thee. His mercy endureth for ever. Wherefore be not downhearted, but for the future use thy gifts to the edifying of the Church of God ; so shalt thou purchase to thyself a good degree. Thou hast heard of the blessed Faventino Fannio, who suffered here in the piazza of Ferrara ? He had an hour of weakness like thine, when his young wife and his friends persuaded him to deny Christ ; but he was miserable till he again confessed him, and did his best to repair the error by sowing the truth through the Romagna. Some here," added Portus, looking round the room, "knew him well, and learned the knowledge of salvation from his lips, even in his prison."

Yes : one had been confined for a crime, and by Fannio's teaching had been brought to sin no more ; another had visited him from the pious motive of trying to controvert his errors, and been himself drawn into them beyond remedy ; others had read letters of his issuing from his cell of solitary confinement, and by them been freed into the glorious liberty of the gospel. Truly Rome was wise to put out of the way the author of so

much damage to her empire, whose efforts to spread divine truth ceased but with his mortal breath.

“And if he glorified God by after life, why mayest not thou?” continued Portus. “Dying for Christ is not always the best way of serving him; if all his confessors were martyred, would truth be found upon the earth? Wherefore be of good courage, brother; thou hast work to do for the Master yet.”

The monk raised his hollow eyes, which had been hidden by his hand. “There is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared,” he murmured. “And oh, brother, I have had a bitter repentance since!”

When he had returned to his Bolognese convent with the ban of the Inquisition upon him and many irksome penances to perform, such as carrying heavy tapers for hours about the church and in street processions, dressed as a penitent; or lying for hours in the form of a cross, extended on the stone pavement before our Lady’s altar; or repeating hundreds of aves and credos, and dozens of penitential psalms within a given time; or passing days in darkness and solitude in subterranean cells beneath the monastery,—he found these acts of enforced mortification an intolerable dissembling. The solitary hours which his spiritual overseers

intended him to spend in meditation on his heresies were indeed so spent, but with a difference. The doctrines which were the convictions of his soul came again uppermost, and demanded their supremacy. A season of deep depression for his sin was followed by another sight of the Lord Jesus as the pardoner for his own sake; and the renegade monk found it impossible to continue to appear what his heart disavowed. After some lengthened imprisonment for his lapse, he was permitted to escape by connivance of the civil authorities, who, in Bologna, preserved some traditions of former freedom, and did not always allow the Inquisitors to ride roughshod over them, but were capable of being visited by an occasional impulse of human pity; for the doublet and hose of the laic covered charities and sympathies wholly unknown to the priestly heart.

Such was the story of the renegade monk—a story far from uncommon with pliant natures and tender, nervous temperaments, who grasped a belief without being able physically to brave the suffering it entailed. Yet by drawing back in the hour of trial they incurred mental torture worse than the bodily—a torture whence some of them gladly rushed for refuge even to rack and stake

again, rather than face the endless anguish of remorse.

One or two other brethren spoke afterward. The subject of the address of the last—an old, white-haired man leaning on a stick—was the suggestive expression of Scripture: “As when a standard-bearer fainteth.”

“My brethren,” he said, “I remember when I was a young man, in wars which are now forgotten, as all the pomp and pageants of this world pass away—I mind me, when in battle he who bore the banner fell, it was as though the army was routed, for its ensign of victory was gone! But if he had only fainted through the sore burden, and arose again, raising his standard, or if a stronger hand drew it from his weak grasp, and upheld it in sight of friend and foe, then arose a shout from the ranks; for the old flag was floating once more, and all remembered that the general who led the army was still at its head. My brethren, it is so with us: our standard-bearer hath for the moment fainted and the banner lies low; shall we therefore be dispirited? No, comrades, for the great Captain never leaves our van; and the standard will be lifted by some stronger hand, though I may not live to see it.”

All understood the old soldier's allusion to the drawing back of the Duchess Renée under the threats of her husband, and his words deeply moved the little assemblage. His voice, which had deepened into energy as he spoke, broke again into trembling accents when he resumed :

"I have lived many years in the world—years before the infamous Borgia sat upon Peter's throne—and I remember the time when Italy lay black as a moonless midnight in the thickest darkness of ignorance. I was here in the days of Ercole the First, when all the great streets of Ferrara were built. I remember when none in all Italy dare wag his tongue against priest or friar—when they did what they liked, and lived how they chose, and the blessed word of God was never heard of. I suppose the monks had it locked up safely, out of the way. At last a monk got at it, and he was honester than the rest, and he spoke about the wonderful things in the book. But they burned him because he would not be silent. His name was Savonarola: he was born here in Ferrara, I have heard old people say. He was the first dawn of the light, blessed be God! The light has been all over Italy since. My comrades, we are not to be cast down when the stand-



ard-bearer faints. My grandson read that for me from the good book; I thought it like ourselves; I thought I would say a few words about it, as I am a very old man. We will fight on, comrades."

He sat down again. Ah, that the great Duchess Renée should deserve such a censure, and should give such discouragement to the people of the Lord!

The little prayer-meeting presently dispersed, its members dropping away in twos and threes at intervals, and taking unfrequented paths back into the wider thoroughfares. A knot of half a dozen remained to witness the betrothal of Bianca di Montaldo to the young physician Francesco Altieri.



CHAPTER XXII.

PADUA.

AND now to seek for a home to shelter that dear one who would entrust herself to him all the world over—a home in which they might with peace worship God as their consciences directed them. Where, through the length and breadth of tormented, restless, priest-ridden Italy, was such a spot to be found?

Francesco had been to Venice seeking it, though ostensibly bound on other errands. He imagined that in his native republic he might find protection for the faith which was incorporate with his life. He knew that the signory had never permitted the establishment of the Inquisition as a domestic institution within their territories; he had himself been brought up at Vicenza and Padua, where were flourishing Reformed chnrches, which no man made afraid in those days. The wide commerce of Venice made liberty of speech and of thought wellnigh a state necessity in her cosmopolitan society. Her Senate was aware of

this, and was very slow to lay an iron yoke of Rome's forging on the people's neck. Powers civil and ecclesiastic did not pull together to accomplish this end, but for a long time pulled most contrariwise. A papal rescript complained to the doge that the magistrates of Vicenza would not aid their bishop in extirpating heresy, but rather connived at the scandal. Alas! that blot of toleration was now removed from the Venetian scutcheon. The Reformed churches had been scattered, broadcast, into many lands. The Lutheran was become as much a fair object of chase and of cruelty on Venetian soil as elsewhere, though up to this time no lives had been sacrificed to the demon of bigotry.

But the thin edge of the wedge had been introduced into the state; Roman artifices had procured the admission of inquisitors as judges in all cases of heresy, with the saving clause that certain civil magistrates should always be present at such trials to examine witnesses and scrutinize the whole procedure. Under this joint jurisdiction, nevertheless, the galleys were pretty well replenished with heretics; there was soon no spot in the republic's provinces safe for the sole of a Lutheran foot.

Francesco found his brother living still at Padua,

holding an office in the university, and reputably veiling his opinions by an occasional hearing of mass and a regular payment of dues. “What can I do?” he said; “behold my little children!”

“And our mother, Giuseppe—our mother, descended from the purest blood of the Vaudois, who have held God’s truth as an heirloom through generations—what would she say could she know of the weak compliance?”

“My poor little children!” was all Giuseppe’s argument.

But there was in this temporizing something far more excusable than in that of the physician Di Montalto, personal selfishness being the mainspring of the latter.

It set Francesco deeply thinking whether, in these perilous times, he would do right to encumber his fate with a wife, however beloved. How much stronger, then, would be his bonds to the present evil world! How much harder would he find it to bear testimony for his Saviour, even to the death, if needed! Would it be just to her to ask her to link her life with one in frequent danger, in continual poverty? For his patrimony was but small, and unless he settled in some great town, under a great patron, his profession would prove

little resource; and he could not live in a public position without his religion attracting notice. Alas! those were times when the dearest relations of life only exposed the followers of Christ to the intenser suffering.

“Thou seest, my brother,” pursued Giuseppe, breaking in upon the young man’s reverie—“thou seest that the blessed Lord, having given me these children, doth not intend that I should fail in duty toward them by leaving them orphans prematurely. He intendeth that I should train them up in his nurture and fear, which I am doing, God wot! And when thou hast wife and little ones thyself, my Francesco, thou wilt not think evil of the outward compliance which gaineth for them bread and home.”

“I would ask thee a question, Giuseppe mio. Is it now with thee as in days past? Hast thou the heavenly presence in thine heart strongly as when we both lingered before Ochino’s pulpit and heard words of life from his lips?”

“It was excitement,” said the other, yet with a somewhat averted glance—“it was but excitement, and youth’s blood is easily made hot. And if thou wantest examples,” he added, with alacrity, “have we not in this very city Pietro Carnesecchi, the

Florentine, keeping his opinions quiet for his safety's sake?"

This was not altogether the case. Carnesecchi had been a wanderer in many lands for Christ's sake before he settled in Padua about 1552. Savoy and France had successively yielded him asylum; and he who was once so influential at the papal court that a proverb ran "The Church is governed rather by Carnesecchi than by Pope Clement," was a persecuted, homeless man, in daily dread, at the present juncture, of a monitory summons to appear at Rome and give himself up to the most furiously bigoted pontiff that had ever sat under the tiara. But he was prepared for the worst, this gentle, amiable, accomplished Florentine—this man with such refined tastes, such distinguished appearance, such courtly manners, who had been lapped in the luxuries of high estate until the heresy blasted his prospects, and caused men to consider his wisdom folly and his sobriety madness. Twelve years from the present date, that is to say, in 1567, his long imprisonment in Roman dungeons ended, and the block and stake give him eternal freedom.

"And does Carnesecchi compromise so far as to attend the idolatrous mass?" asked Francesco.

Brother Giuseppe, colouring, could not assert that he did, but then he held no public employment; and more than all, the little children must live.

Francesco said nothing further on the subject, though strongly into his mind came the Redeemer's declaration, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

May we all remember that even in our enlightened nineteenth century the force of this passage remains the same, and the need for our fulfilment of the great duty it enjoins. Still must we confess Christ before men, unheeding smile or sneer, if we would share in his glory at the last.

"Giuseppe mio," asked Francesco, by and by, "I would fain learn something of our uncle, Baldassare Altieri—he who was secretary to the English embassy. Have there been late tidings of him? Tell me what thou knowest."

"No late tidings," replied his brother; "I fear me he has fallen into the hands of his enemies. He was hiding in the Brescian territory when we last heard, and his letter said that he was there in great trouble and danger of his life. We know,"

cautious Giuseppe spoke very softly, with a furtive glance at the closed door of the apartment, “that the Holy Office has spies everywhere, and scarce a dog can run across a road in Italy but they know it. Therefore I believe that our good uncle has been tracked and seized: we shall never hear of him again. For oftentimes, when they cannot punish a heretic with impunity at any particular city, they convey him secretly to some other, where he is unknown, or to Rome itself, where the whole world might seek for him in vain.”

All his caution could not suppress a little shudder, as the ubiquity of the selfsame Holy Office occurred to him forcibly. He would go to hear mass the very next day, would Giuseppe, further to lull suspicion; nay, he wondered if it would not be good policy to make some sort of confession to some friar or other? This was an undercurrent of thought. Aloud, he was saying, “Had our good uncle stayed among the Grisons, he would be safe; that was my advice to him. He had made himself too remarkable to return to Venice with impunity; the magistrates could scarce do anything else than demand a recantation, and condemn him to exile when he refused. You see, brother Francesco, had he followed my plan—”

"I never quite understood," interposed the other, "why he went into the Grison country at that time."

"He wanted to get the agency of the cantons, as he already held that of the Elector of Saxony and other Lutheran princes, at Venice: he thought he could then bring their influence to bear in favour of the Protestants. But he only succeeded in getting letters of commendation in behalf of the persecuted, which caused him much disappointment. Passing through Padua on his way back, he told me that he knew of the designs of his enemies, and how much he was hated by the papal party in Venice: he foreboded the worst, and asked our prayers. When I besought him to attend to his private affairs, and provoke none by an undue display of zeal—for thou knowest, brother, that he had a wife and child dependent on him—he replied, somewhat hotly, 'God forbid that I should entertain the blasphemous thought of ceasing to labour for Christ, who never ceased labouring in my cause until he had endured the reproach of the cross. I am ready to meet whatever may befall me, and willing to be bound for the name of Christ.' He was always a trifle too impetuous, was our worthy uncle."

Francesco did not care to controvert the opinion ; he knew how that alleged impetuosity ranked in the estimate of Heaven. But from that hour to the present nothing further was ever heard of the intrepid Baldassare Altieri ; he probably perished in nameless martyrdom ; but is not “the death of his saints” “precious” in the eyes of the Lord ? And shall not the smallest particle of their dust, whether dispersed in ashes over a flowing tide, or walled up in a black, forgotten dungeon, or sleeping peacefully in our quiet English churchyards, be raised again in glory at the last day ?

Padua was no place for him to settle ; Francesco came to that conclusion. The other conclusion to which he was coming, that this restless era was no time for him to marry, lasted in force till he arrived at Ferrara again. After a few days he became convinced that with a beloved wife he could better stand the brunt of every storm likely to assail him ; and as another person was of the same opinion, the result was the betrothal by the renegade monk before mentioned.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COMING CLOUD OF WAR.

THAT was a betrothal shadowed by many an anxious doubt and fear. For to the followers of Christ in the Reformation of the sixteenth century every relationship of life, even the sweetest, became embittered. Parent looked anxiously on child, because not the tenderest years could disarm the rage of persecution or stay the assassin's hand if once let loose to shed Protestant blood; husband and wife knew that their bond of union might at any moment be severed by the sword; the lover and his betrothed dare not yield to the happy anticipations natural to their estate, for were they not of a proscribed race, to whom the face of the earth seemed to offer no safe resting-place? Perhaps their hearts were all the more in heaven.

Di Montaldo did not very much relish his daughter's choice in the present juncture of circumstances. Any tacit encouragement formerly given to the affair when they lived at Locarno had arisen from a half-formed idea that this young man,

of good character, would be a suitable partner and successor for himself in his “practice,” as a modern physician would term it. But now, when the family was living on his precarious gains in a foreign city (and the professions were just as over-stocked in those days as they are now, and there was as little opening for a new leech in Ferrara as in any English country town which boasts the usual staff of physician, surgeon and a couple of chemists), and when young Altieri was totally without employment, and with but a small sum of money in the celebrated Bank of Venice for his patrimony—the elder physician very naturally thought that circumstances looked rather gloomy for a betrothal. Like all other fathers, he would fain have seen something tangible for the young pair to live upon before they contemplated house-keeping. However, the preliminary ceremony of betrothal did not of necessity imply subsequent marriage, and Di Montalto was an easy-going man, addicted to the *laissez faire*: he permitted it to take place, but, rather sulkily, so managed his employments for the day that he could not be present.

No rosy horizon opened forth before these betrothed ones, as they returned quietly through the

quaint streets from standing before the renegade monk. No troops of friends escorted them, nor was a feast prepared in celebration; no festal garlands, no picturesque scene-work, as *fête*-loving Italians are wont to arrange round every available occasion in their lives. A looker-on would have said, "How sombre!" The Ferrarese maidens of Bianca's acquaintance did say, "How stupid!" There was no end to the decorations and junkettings *they* would have had! But these "novatori," you know, these "infected" people, are so queer, so different from everybody else! None could see the wellspring of tranquil happiness that lay deep in those newly-united hearts; only each knew it of the other, and was satisfied.

One or two friends, also "infected" people, came to sup with the *promessi sposi* and their parents; chief of them the Madonna Morata, her daughter and son-in-law, the Milanese gentleman who had asked no dower with his wife, because his own means were enough. But Francesco had dower neither to get nor to give. A most improvident match, surely! Even the usual chestful of clothes and jewelry would probably be wanting to this poor pair. Any gossips of Dame Barbara's acquaintance in Ferrara held but the one opinion on the

matter ; and such topics were just as interesting to the female mind then as now.

Di Montaldo was thinking some desponding thoughts about it when he came into his house in the afternoon ; for since the court appointment he had succeeded in obtaining a roof of his own. He set himself moodily to inscribe some manuscript by the window, not heeding Bianca's presence till she drew near to him and stood by his chair :

“ Father ! will you not speak to me on this day ? ”

Tears were in her eyes and in her voice as she spoke : he looked up suddenly : “ Child ! what would you have ? ”

He laid by the great goosequill which he was dipping in the inkhorn, rose to his feet and blessed her solemnly ; then kissed her brow. It was an age when the reverence of children to parents was carried to a pitch of obsequiousness which seems most strange to this free-and-easy generation. Bianca durst not even return the caress, though her heart yearned to her father.

“ And now, child, for this foolish lover of thine. I met him in the street but anon—I gave him my benediction also ; though I could wish thou wert

to marry a man more settled in the world, mia figlia, and able to take thee under a roof-tree of thine own. I suppose thou thinkest thy Francesco fortune and dower enough? Well, so said thy mother in the day of our espousal; and I know not whether she has repented her trust."

Plucking that grizzled beard as he spoke, and looking furtively, for he could not but guess that many a time of late he had been a sore cross to his bolder-minded wife, while he was trying to walk as no time-server has ever yet succeeded in walking—one foot in the narrow and another in the broad way.

"But it is certain," added the physician, rousing himself, and his face changing into sternness, "that marriage for you both is out of the question, till Altieri can show me a home for thee, Bianca mia." He kissed her again, but with rather a chillier touch, and resumed his quill and horn over the parchment of the manuscript he was noting.

Presently thereafter arrived the widow Morata; and Di Montaldo received her with his best affability. Men of his character have a strong regard for external advantages of any sort, and prefer these even in the past tense to the undistinguished indi-

viduals who have never had them at all. The halo of the lost court-life surrounded this faded woman even still in the eyes of the Locarnese physician. And while the newly-affianced pair were talking low apart, the elders were travelling back over times when things were very different in Ferrara, and when that Reformed faith which now was a bar was a passport to the favour of the reigning family.

“But,” quoth Di Montalto, “the Church had not then decided as to whether many of Luther’s doctrines were to be believed or not. Now this council of the fathers at Trent is settling everything: methinks it were not just to censure men for espousing opinions which had never been condemned by the Church. How is a man to know whether faith or works is the justifier, unless the Church will speak plain?”

His wife looked at him half sorrowfully: was expedience then to be the sole rule of faith? But she said nothing, and he took care not to glance toward her as he added, “The Almighty knows that we are often obliged to put on an appearance of believing what we don’t believe; but he is most merciful, and looks more to one’s heart than to one’s knees.”

“ Yet the blessed Lord was not pleased when San Pietro denied him three times ; and San Pietro would perchance not have denied him had he not been sitting familiarly among the servants of his enemies,” said the dame Lucrezia Morata ; who was in her heart somewhat disposed to condemn the cringing principles of the physician, and had moreover a womanly sympathy for her friend, his wife. Well she guessed what her decision of spirit must suffer, mated with his indecision—her heart, full of fervour, yoked to his timid, calculating brain. But this unsuitability was Dame Barbara’s private cross, which she revealed to none by word or act.

Before long the physician betook himself again to his manuscript of medical secrets, bequeathed to him from his master in the art thirty years ago, who again inherited it from his, a generation farther back. For these ever-during parchments had not yet been quite superseded by the comparatively ephemeral printed books. Look over Di Montaldo’s shoulder, and you, graduate of our modern colleges, will strangely despise the lore therein presented with all gravity. “ Pulverized human bones” is an article constantly recurring in the pharmacopœia ; much is written of the virtues of eggshells and sodden snails. “ The toad’s stone”

is a specific against poison, and stanches blood when all other styptics fail; daisy-tea cures gout and rheumatism; and for almost every ailment the earliest remedy is letting blood; which, indeed, is of greatest repute in Italian medical practice to this day. Then there are no end of prescriptions for charms and amulets; for a drink to make splintered bones come out of the wound of their own accord; a balsam of bats, comprising such ingredients as earth-worms, adders, the marrow of a stag, etc.; and if the amethyst be hung round the neck, or, more efficacious still, be powdered into a draught, "it resists sorrow and recreates the heart;" the sapphire, similarly used, will yet more marvellously operate, by freeing the mind and mending the manners. Whence it will appear that these sixteenth-century physicians had secrets for moral as well as corporeal cures, entering with fearless foot upon ground where their modern successors dare not tread.

The good Doctor di Montalto was known to take refuge in this volume, and in noting his "cases" on interleaves of paper, whenever perturbed by domestic or other occurrences. Professor Portus came in by and by with the latest whisperings of court news; likewise with an offering of a

Latin epithalamium, or betrothal ode, to the bride elect, whereof she very ignorantly did not comprehend more than a few nouns here and there; but could not Francesco translate it for her? "Ah," exclaimed the professor, regretfully, "what a rare head for polite learning was lost in the Signorina Bianca! I could wish she had been attending my course of readings from Sophocles"—a desire not echoed by the subject of it.

The court news was rather important. For *on dit* in the Ferrarese world that Philip II., newly ascended on the throne of Spain by the abdication of that emperor whose will had been law to half Europe for thirty years, was forming a party in Italy, clustering round his dependencies of Milan and Naples, to counterpoise French influence; and Cosmo de Medici, duke of Tuscany, with Ottavio Farnese, duke of Parma, were reported to have allied themselves in the design. "And of course," said the professor, oracularly, "our Duke Erecole goes with his nephew, Henry of France, who is leagued hand and glove with his Holiness. More clouds and storm for us, poor Lutherans;" whereat his friend, the physician, slightly shivered, and complained of a draught of air from the ill-fitting leaden casement.

Bolder hearts than the Locarnese doctor's might tremble. Two of the fiercest persecutors ever moulded were sitting irresponsibly on the world's loftiest thrones, and determined in their unrighteous hearts to make war on the saints ; whatever else disagreed upon, firmly agreed in this, to press the iron hoof of uniformity, even to crushing, upon the necks of all nations.

"We have had no war in Lombardy, to speak of, since 1552," said Portus, further. "But Paul IV., our duke's suzerain, is a very firebrand, old as he is—enough to set all Italy in a blaze."

"Ercole is peacefully inclined enough, himself," observed Di Montalto.

"Yes, but he dare not offend his liege lord ; he has a good memory, and can recall what his father Alfonso suffered from Julius and Clement. Even peace' sake may force him into war ; but whichever side gain the upper hand, whether Philip or Paul, we poor Lutherans are equally in the lurch."

"'God is our refuge and strength,'" said Francesco, in a low tone to his betrothed ; "'a very present help in trouble : therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed.'"

But a shadow was creeping over Francesco's own hopeful heart likewise.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TEMPTATION.

AFTER the company had departed that selfsame shadow wrapped round Di Montalto's mien loweringly as he still bent over his chirurgical manuscript.

“A word with you, messer, ere you leave,” he said, in almost a hostile manner, to Altieri, while the goosequill scratched a transcript of some prescription. It cost Bianca something to retire after her mother and leave him to face the brunt of the storm alone.

“And 'tis not just,” she thought in her little heart—“'tis not just of my father to have given his consent to our betrothal, and now to harass Francesco with doubts and fears; I hope I have not done wrong in thinking thus of my father. I hope I was right in loving Francesco. Oh I hope it is not all, all wrong!” as a hundred irrepressible anxieties thronged before her mind, and she threw herself on her knees beside her bed, in the small cell which was her chamber, where her mother

found her presently, and comforted her with that thoughtful tenderness which reads even unexpressed doubts by the intuition of love. Remembrance of her own maidenhood brought her interpretation for poor little Bianca's tears. And she could repeat to her the oft-told consolation, that the heavenly Father above was watching lovingly over her and over him, and would guide their lives at the last to some perfect end.

Meanwhile, Francesco was sitting at the table on which his patron was writing, without the latter's taking heed of him for some space. But the puckered lines on his forehead deepened with the access of uneasy thoughts.

“ You desired speech with me, signor,” said the young man, after a pause of watching the slow letters as they grew under the quill.

“ Yes,” replied the elder, throwing down his pen: “ I want to know what you will do about this betrothal. It is a very foolish business, where there is nothing to live upon.”

“ Certainly, signor,” rejoined the young man, with frigid politeness, but a blush mounting to his forehead, “ I hope that my profession—”

To his amazement, Di Montaldo repeated these last words, laying most scornful emphasis on

“hope” and “profession.” “You ought to know, messer, that no one can live on *hopes*.”

“Nor do I expect it, signor,” said Francesco, who grew cooler when he saw the excitement of the other; and under no circumstances could he be angry with Bianca’s father. “I mean to work, and to earn a position for myself and for her.”

“Ay, under the ban of the Church, a proscribed heretic, with your neck in the noose. A Lutheran, with every man’s hand against him through the wide world!”

It was very exasperating to a man of no particular faith—at least of none that had made lodgment in his heart—to find his plans obstructed and himself impoverished by the obstinate adherence of others to an unprofitable, nay, a positively ruinous, heresy.

“I ought to have withheld my consent,” added this vacillating and irascible temper, “until some better turn in affairs. It is a positive sacrifice of the little one’s prospects in life. There is a gallant at court admires her much.”

“Signor,” said Francesco, whose heart was growing hot within him, “this is beside the mark. What you wish to speak of is the future, not the unchangeable past. I purposed to seek for a home

in the Calabrias, among kinsfolk of my mother, until you expressed your disapprobation, and desired me to try the expedient of opening classes in the languages at this university; but now I think of Modena as more suitable, and the worthy Professor Franciscus Portus but this day promised me patronage of his friends there, he having read Greek lectures in that university for many years."

The elder physician had time to calm during this speech, though he still looked sullen. He had been walking about perturbedly; now he drew near and stood:

"Hearken, my friend. Thou art young, and not devoid of talent, which may push thy way to the highest chair in the colleges. Why lose thy best chances, and doom *her* to a life of struggle and of poverty, because of an open profession of a faith which all society disowns? Why not cloak thy creed till happier times shall give liberty? Thy life belongs not now altogether to thyself; thou hast pledged it to *her*: why needlessly risk it? Canst not hold thy faith as firm under the disguise of an apparent conformity to things indifferent as if thou wert a mark for the scorn of all men—a very outcast; and couldst thou bear to have *her* such?"

The first words of this artful address had found Francesco very resolved : the last words had trickled deeply under the foundation of his firmness ; he drooped his face upon his hands. The tempter, encouraged by this symptom of indecision, went on, touching his shoulder with his finger :

“Conceal thy faith : that is all I would have of thee. Heaven forbid that I should ask thee to violate thy conscience further. Thou art called to no public recantation, no open denial ; thou art but entreated by all that is dearest to thee to refrain from outward demonstration against the Roman creed—to purchase thyself an easy life—ay, my Francesco, and to purchase *her* a happy life—by a simple negation, a simple abstinence from assertion of thy belief or thy non-belief. Think well of it, my son, and thou wilt see the wisest and kindest course.”

He resumed his walk into the shadows at each end of the lank apartment, leaving his words to work. But before the shrouded eyes of the young man had arisen, during those last sentences, a melancholy vision of memory—a ghastly face and form lying in ever-during mental anguish, lips always burning with the thirst, always refusing

drink, often shaping and uttering the despairing words, “ My sin is greater than the mercy of God ! I have denied Christ voluntarily and against my knowledge ; and I feel that he hardens me and will allow me no hope. Yes, my sin is greater than God’s mercy.”

Then, for a moment, the closing scenes of that sad drama : the slow-decaying atrophy sapping life away ; the restless, bloodshot eyes, very homes of blank despair ; groups of Romish priests—ay, up to the purple legate, all powerless to bring an instant’s consolation ; humble, simply-clad Christian men, whose prayers might suffice, like Elijah’s, to shut or open the windows of heaven, all powerless likewise to bring a ray of peace to the apostate’s soul ; and the last supreme hour, when the tormented skeleton frame slowly yielded up its tormented spirit, with the fearful conviction that, as he had rejected Christ, Christ had also for ever rejected him.

Francesco sprang to his feet :

“ No, signor—never, never ! I have seen Spira the apostate. I beheld him devoured with the torments of hell for many miserable months even in this world. I was in the church at Citadella,” he added in a quieter tone, “ the day that he

repeated his abjuration at the close of the mass, before two thousand persons, who had often heard him preach mightily the doctrines of free grace; and I saw him swoon away for very anguish when the words were ended. Afterward at Padua I was brought to his chamber by one of the many surgeons attendant on him; it is eight years ago, but nothing of yesterday's experience is more vividly before me than that haggard, despairing man, a lost soul incarnate, ever seeming to have foretaste of endless agonies. Present with him continually was the judgment day in its worst terrors, and the nether hell in its vast despair."

"A very pretty case of insanity, or, more probably, of demoniacal possession," he remarked, with affected carelessness, when the speaker paused. "The man wanted to be exorcised—some witchcraft was over him. A very pretty case of insanity," he remarked again, in a dogged sort of tone, as if determined that nothing should convince him to the contrary. "I suppose that the upshot of all this is that you will not do the sensible thing, but are determined to ruin both yourself and the confiding little one who has trusted herself to you. If I foresaw you would have been so headstrong—"

"Signor," interrupted Francesco, respectfully,

“you knew that my principles were fixed on the ground of God’s word, which is unchangeable. I have been brought up in the Reformed faith, yet not for that reason do I adhere to it, but because it is the religion of my heart, and because my Saviour, the most blessed Christ, has given me the joy of his divine love in my soul. Moreover, signor, you ask me to do what, were Bianca here, for whose sake you urge it, she would be the first to forbid and condemn. She would despise me were I to stifle or suppress my religion for the sake of any worldly advantages. If I mistake her not most grievously, she would prefer a poor and narrow home, unpurchased by apostate concessions, to the richest palazzo in all Modena, gained by a virtual denial of our heavenly Lord.”

“Well, well,” said the poor, puzzled physician, “she will know what she will know, after a few years of such sordid life. But it comes to this, that between the obstinacy of you three, my house is the most ill-smelling* in all Ferrara, and I hope I shall be able to keep out of the duke’s dungeons. Young people will be so hot and so headstrong!” And he muttered further to him-

* A colloquial expression of the time, signifying tainted with heresy.

self, as he stowed away inkhorn and manuscripts in the drawers of a tall beaufet by the wall.

“I hope I need not say, signor, that I shall run myself into no unnecessary danger, and that I shall preserve Bianca with all the powers of my head and hand from every harm or trouble,” quoth the newly-affianced, with a very warm glow at his heart from the thought of that pleasant duty. “I shall strive to obey and to please her father in everything which interferes not with the higher fealty I owe to my divine Saviour.”

“Well, well,” repeated Di Montalto, as if to himself, “queer notions are afloat now-a-days. Men like to get their heads broken, when they might live easy lives. And mine the most ill-smelling house in all Ferrara, as the Padre Abbate told me but to-day! Well, well.”

And Bianca heard like mutterings to these as she lay awake in her little stone cell, every sense watching for the close of the conference, when her father came heavily up the narrow steps which wound past her door, and another tread passed downward into the street. The poor little betrothed prayed for both very fervently.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW THINGS WENT ON IN MODENA.

A MONTH afterward the new classical teacher had commenced his lectures at Modena, backed by efficient recommendations from the learned of Ferrara. Of course he found vested interests to oppose him, and would have to work his way through the disadvantages of youth and an unknown name; but there appeared very reasonable prospect of his doing well after a time, provided he kept quiet those unfortunate religious opinions.

Almost every city of any note in Northern Italy possessed a university in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The age of the “Renaissance” (as it was fondly called), the time of the new birth of science and the awakening of literature, was distinguished by a supreme desire for collegiate education. The scholars of Europe wandered from one seat of learning to another, imparting and receiving knowledge by turns. A constellation of professors gathered at the great schools of Parma,

Pisa, Florence, Venice, Padua, Mantua, Milan, Brescia, and a score others scattered thick through Lombardy. And as usual, true learning attended true religion as handmaid. The most enlightened colleges were those with the greatest names attached to their chairs ; most of the Reformed “infection” was found where dwelt the highest repute for secular knowledge.

Duke Ercole II., Renée’s husband, possessed two of these illuminated cities in his small feudatory dominions. Both Ferrara and Modena contained distinguished universities. But the former was declining strangely of late years. It was surely singular that from the period when the duke had thrown his sword into mother Church’s scale, and done his best to secure purity and uniformity of Catholicism in his capital, the brightest ornament of that capital should immediately begin to decline and fade. Yet this certainly was the case. Where now was the galaxy of genius that had decorated the Ferrarese university during the early years of Renée’s reign ? Names which wake no echo of memory in our nineteenth century then commanded the audience of civilized Europe ; Calcagnini filling the chair of *belles lettres* with a universality of accomplishments which at our

present Oxford or Cambridge would excite wonder ; Giraldi, the renowned Grecian of vast erudition ; Guarini, the grammarian, also the duke's secretary ; Ricci, the writer of the best Italian comedy extant, tutor to Prince Alfonso ; the brothers Sinapi, presiding respectively over Greek and medicine ; Celio Curione, celebrated for eloquence : all these stars glittered in Ferrara before the cloud of bigotry blotted out their brightness. For most of them were persons of "ill-savour," suspected of favouring or else having openly espoused the new German doctrines, which were setting all society by the ears ; and when Duke Ercole sold himself to do evil at the papal bidding, his covey of learned professors grew frightened and took to flight. Students ceased to crowd the halls when the attraction of teachers with great names was withdrawn : the Ferrarese university had received its death-blow, and not even the subsequent glory of Ariosto's residence could revive it.

Strange, how generally a declension in all things of worldly value has followed a suppression of religious liberty through every land ! As surely as night follows the setting of the sun, so surely do the people degenerate who have been deprived of freedom of conscience. What incalculable hap-

piness and wealth has Italy lost by her rejection of a pure gospel when it stood in her midst, and attracted the noblest and best of her sons about its glorious shining! What incalculable wealth and happiness has Britain gained by her acceptance of the same gospel, and her kindling from its light the household fires of generations!

But those “who love darkness rather than light” were in power over poor Italy. This very year 1556, in particular, when Philip and Paul were quarrelling, and Michael Angelo was repairing the fortifications of Rome with a view to siege by those faithful children of the Church, Alva’s troops, the Inquisition was more busily at work than ever since its resuscitation under the Third Paul. The system of espionage was working well. A cloud of terror hung over the wretched sectaries who dared seek for freedom of conscience on this side the Alps. “A look, a word, the possession of a book deemed heretical, or of a New Testament in the vulgar tongue, were offences sufficient to expose persons, without distinction of age, sex, rank, or office, first to imprisonments, afterward by means of torture to forced confessions, to no less forced recantations, or, as the case might turn out, to death itself.” Thus writes an historian of

credit: thus went on the crusade against God's truth.

Perhaps there was less of this ecclesiastic tyranny in Duke Ercole's dominions than elsewhere in Italy, except in that far sunny south of the Calabrias, where, under a convention more than a century and a half old, a goodly colony of Waldenses worshipped the God of their fathers without present molestation. Thither Francesco's heart often turned in wishful longings for such external peace. Certain of his mother's kinsfolk had settled there with the last migration of Vaudois, about the year 1500; and so he felt to have some tie with the region, besides the common bond of the common faith. He would take part of his patrimony in broad pieces from the Bank of Venice, and purchase a strip of land and a house, and settle himself and Bianca in rural life.

His solitary castle in the air! and a modest one enough; but Di Montalto set his face wholly against such felicitous obscurity. He was unwilling that the talents he despaired in his future son-in-law should thus be buried—lost alike to name and fame. He was pleased with the praises which the Professor Portus, and the acute critic Castelvetro of Modena (to whom Portus had introduced Fran-

cesco), uttered concerning the young man's abilities. The patronage of the latter, himself also one of the "infected," procured several pupils for the new teacher of medicine and of Greek. The distinguished Academia del Grillenzone, so called because that company of learned men met originally in the house of a physician with this name, was inclined to take up the young Venetian and push his interests. All might be well, muttered the old father-in-law, if only he will keep under those unfortunate religious opinions.

For some time the suspicion that he was addicted to Lutheranism rather served than injured him, notwithstanding. The sympathy among the learned of Italy for the Reformation movement was largely diffused. War with the illiteracy of the Romish priests was the normal state of literature and its professors. A decree of the Inquisition about this period states that three thousand schoolmasters had embraced Reformed tenets; and that vigilant tribunal immediately addressed its energies to lessen the number. Perhaps our poor Francesco was included in the list, for he was incapable of dissimulation. The most he could do was to refrain from demonstration.

Once, Modena had been most remarkable for

her enthusiastic reception of the Lutheran doctrines. "Persons of all classes," writes a contemporary Romish author, "whenever they meet in the streets, in shops, or in churches, disputed about faith and the law of Christ, and all promiscuously tortured the sacred Scriptures, quoting Paul, Matthew, John, the Apocalypse, and all the doctors." * Cardinal Morone, bishop of the see, and himself tainted, says it was the common report that "the whole city was turned Lutheran." But the all-powerful Inquisition had worked with conclusive effect: heresy only smouldered in the popular depths now.

Francesco had entrance to the academic conver-sazioni, which were the chief form of social intercourse among the higher educated classes of the day in university towns. To a modern of our time these gatherings would have been insufferably stiff; for the themes of commonest talk were readings of obscure passages in the classics, the last new watery sonnet of some bepraised literary favourite, the abstruse doctrine of predestination or free will, the pursuance of an argument through weary stages of syllogisms. From specimens that have descended to us we may congratulate our-

* Tassoni.

selves that our colloquial entertainments have taken a livelier turn. But there was one subject which never failed to kindle all hearts—one dangerous subject, perhaps fascinating from its very danger, to be spoken of with bated breath and a glance round for spies. The tenets taught among them by Ochino, and later by Ricci and the friar Pergala, were more interesting by far than any scholastic disputation; and many of the wise men of Modena had taken them into their hearts and owned them as a rule of life.

“But I fear me a storm is brewing for us,” remarked Castelvetro to his young acquaintance, Altieri, as they stood at a case of old Roman coins: “the inquisitors look very brisk these few days past, as if fresh orders had arrived from headquarters. ‘Il Padre Canonico’ of the Duomo glances at me most knowingly, as who should say, ‘You’re a heretic, good Ludovico, and I’ll have my hands on you by and by!’”

Francesco smiled. “I suppose there will be naught for it but the old advice: ‘When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another,’” he observed.

“That saved me more than once or twice,” said a third person, joining the group.

“Ay, that it did, my Filippo!” rejoined Castelvetro, familiarly. “For instance, the night that Erri and his soldiers found the bird flown!”

“How was that?” asked Francesco.

“Well, you must know that we academicians were long known to be a body of ill savour to his Holiness; and one Filippo Valentino, happening to be of noble birth, was reckoned the worst criminal; also because his friends were partial enough to talk of his talent. The Farnese Pope Paul did me the honour of issuing a special brief to Duke Ercole, stating that the author of all heresy in Modena was that son of wickedness, Filippo Valentino, and requesting that I should therefore be delivered up to his merciful hands. And so, one night, I received warning from a friend of the friendly purpose, and had left my house but a short time when Pellegrino Erri and his ‘sbirri’ came up, and, in default of my person, arrested all my papers. I went off to Trent, and after some time got myself elected podesta, which was a safeguard from any legal attempts; but the Inquisition is not particular, and we don’t forget the Borgias; so I keep rather a sharp lookout in general, since I’ve come back to the old nest.”

Here a call rose from the company that the

young nobleman should favour them with some proof of the astonishing memory which was his distinguishing talent. Bowing gracefully, he signified assent; whereupon a learned professor stood up, and read from Erasmus's celebrated "Praise of Folly" several pages.

This treatise, renowned for its biting sarcasm and its daring liberalism, was so popular as to pass through twenty-seven editions during the lifetime of its author, and to be translated into every European tongue. Gadaldino, the great printer of Modena, held now the original Latin version in his hands, wherewith to experiment on Valentino's memory. It sets forth the eulogy of Moria, or Folly, daughter of Plutus, born in the Fortunate Isles, reared in darkness, and become the queen of a powerful empire among men; the satire spares not any, from the triple crown to the friar's frock.

Valentino stood perfectly motionless, his ear slightly bent toward the reader, his eyes fixed on the ground, until the pages were ended; when suddenly raising his head, he began to speak at the opening paragraph, giving to each sentence its due intonation, animating it as if it were his own mental utterance, until he reached the end. This is part of what he pronounced:

“The mind of man is so constituted that imposture has more hold on it than truth. If there be one saint more apocryphal than another, a Saint George, or Christopher, or Barbara, you will see him more worshipped than Peter or Paul—nay, more even than Christ himself. . . . Can there be any greater enemies to the Church than those unholy pontiffs who, by their silence, allow Jesus Christ to be forgotten; who bind him by their mercenary regulations, falsify his doctrine by forced interpretations, and crucify him a second time by their scandalous lives?”

The hum of applause broke into frequent “vivas,” as Valentino uttered the last words of his task with great force. “Ecco! that’s the truth! they suffer the most blessed Christ to be forgotten! they crucify him with their scandalous lives! *E pur troppo vero*—it is but too true!”

Amid the gush of conversation which followed, all tongues being loosened, when Castelvetro was whispering to Francesco, “That is nothing of a test for Valentino’s memory; he hath the principal Latin poets by heart, and after a long sermon he can repeat it word for word”—the master of the house was called aside by one of the servants, who seemed dismayed enough.

Castelvetro returned after a few moments, bearing in his hand a legal-looking document. His own face had changed much in those few moments, and bore almost a haggard expression. And well it might; for the whole prospects of his life had been overcast, and the fear of death had fallen upon him, as by a single stroke.

“*Che vuol dire?* what’s the matter?” and his guests crowded about him curiously, yet some of them with a foreboding.

“Only my citation to appear before the Congregation of the Inquisition at Rome,” replied Castelvetro, in a husky voice, and gazing at the fatal paper. “I don’t know what charges they can have against me—I am sure I have been cautious enough.”

“I never saw one of those birds of ill-omen solitary,” remarked Valentino; “there’s a flock of them abroad, be sure. And shall we meanly cower before them, friends? Shall we not remember our own dear Lord’s saying, ‘Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake? Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.’”

“Ay,” added his brother Bonifacio, who was

provost of the cathedral, “we ought to make a hand-in-hand vow that we will die ere we desert the cause.”

Alas ! less than two years’ imprisonment, subsequently, in the vaults of the Inquisition, taught this fiery disciple his own weakness ; for Bonifacio made a solemn and public recantation, in the Minerva Church at Rome, and afterward in his own at Modena, of all the doctrines which he now thought he would die for !

The company were not long in dispersing that night from Castelvetro’s *conversazione* ; the instinct of fleeing a falling house uppermost with some. The printer and the provost were apprehended and sent under guards to Rome ; Castelvetro and Filippo Valentino fled.

This was the death-blow to the Reformation in Modena.



CHAPTER XXVI.

A CLUE TO A CONSPIRACY.

THE university was pretty well frightened by that swoop of the hawk-like Inquisition. Learning is a delicate plant, which cannot thrive in a disturbed air, but sickens and dies amid storms, even if not uprooted by force of the blast. The tide of students began to recede from Modena likewise, as the city became more orthodox.

Francesco's moderate success for a few months dwindled into a final failure. The prospects of the poor betrothed pair seemed duller than ever, and Di Montalto was yet angrier with himself and those about him for the dismal fate which seemed to link his fortunes so determinedly with the sinking Reformation. Francesco guessed that the women of the family must suffer a good deal from his testy temper, and he sometimes found Bianca with traces of tears on her face; but nothing was ever told him of the husband and father's private demeanour, and he respected their silence.

Now he was trying a teacher's life in Ferrara,

that in Modena having been abruptly closed by the sudden persecution. It was a consolation to be near Bianca, in any case, and to see her every day, though marriage for them seemed as distant as ever. Portus helped him to some pupils, and he struggled on.

The cloud of war now actually lowered over the territories of Ferrara. Duke Erecole yielded at last to entreaties and menaces from his spiritual father the pope, and his very unspiritual nephew Henry II. of France; he joined their league against Philip of Spain in mid-November, 1556, and was named captain-general.

The land rang throughout with preparations for the strife, with the swinging of smith's hammers upon cuirass and halberd, with the tramp of mailed men and the roll of war-wagons. Six thousand infantry were Erecole's contingent to the invading army of France, besides horse and men-at-arms. His son-in-law, the Duke of Guise, was to be his fellow-general.

Francesco offered himself as one of the Ferrarese surgeons to accompany the expedition. He had deliberated much before taking this step, which was so strongly urged by his future father-in-law; he knew not but it might place him in a

false position, making his duty to his earthly prince clash with his duty to his heavenly King.

“ You will make more in a single campaign than in seven years’ slaving at the desk,” quoth Di Montalto. The young physician was not so sure of that, for he disdained to share in plunder ; still there was nothing unlawful in, and there was a certain amount of gain connected with, the post of soldier-surgeon. And Di Montalto urged it on him by every plea ; he might earn a position to enable him to marry Bianca ; and so he went.

Present at the great review, at Reggio, of the allied French and Ferrarese forces ; present at the ineffectual sieges of Coreggio and Guastalla ; present during the idle summer’s watching of the Milanese frontier, where Spaniards swarmed (for Ercole would not leave his own states unprotected, and suffered Guise to go on to the glory of laying waste the Abruzzo and threatening Rome without him), Francesco was weary of camp-life ere he had been a month in it. The scene was most uncongenial, though even among the rough soldiers he found some of the “infected,” like himself, and with them enjoyed stolen worship. In fact, where were not the Reformed to be found in Italy at that time, despite all the savagery of persecution ?

From the pillared halls of the Vatican, where Michel Angelo, a concealed heretic, held audience with his Holiness concerning St. Peter's, and knew that certain cardinals were “lame of the same foot,” to the tent of the trooper, the cell of the Carmelite, the cot of the peasant—Christ’s gospel of glad tidings had penetrated alike to hearts beneath the purple robe, the glittering cuirass, the woollen frock and the hempen doublet. Italy was abundantly leavened with the truth ; but the Inquisition suppressed its healthy fermentation, causing a bitterness which works fatally even still.

Francesco was attached to the household troops, and returned to Ferrara with joy when the duke paid his palace a business visit. And here occurred a circumstance of moment for all parties.

The commonest things in the Italian political world of that age were conspiracies. Everybody of any note had a hand in plots of one kind or other for the promotion or downfall of governments or dynasties ; and some highly respectable personages did not scruple to put their fingers into very dirty plots occasionally, when any big purpose was to be served. Noblemen and ecclesiastics alike, nay, even the delicate hands of high-born women, were found meddling with such ugly work.

Now Duke Ercole being captain-general of the league against King Philip, and his states lying very conveniently for junction to the Spanish fief of the Milanese, it occurred to the astute Cardinal Madrucci and to the Marquis di Pescara, Philip's agents in Italy, that if by any means Ercole and his family could be got rid of, their master's cause would be well served. But, of course, persons in such lofty positions must not be seen at all in the business; there were hangers-on enough, of doubtful reputation, to whom a hint was sufficient; and before long a very neat little conspiracy was hatching in Ferrara itself, within stone's throw of the tremendous red, moated castle, in whose strength Renée securely reposed.

And so it came to pass that one day when the duke walked in the gardens of his grand Belvidere Palace (contemporary historians grow plethoric of fine adjectives in the vain attempt to delineate the splendours of this regal residence of the house of Este)—as he walked here with the lovely Leonora, his youngest daughter, beside him—that Leonora who afterward became “the worship and the woe of Tasso”—one of his gentlemen came to say that a certain young man, but now arrived from the city, craved audience.

“Admit him here,” replied the duke; “this shall be our presence-chamber for the nonce;” and he seated himself on a carved bench which commanded a view of the superb palace at some distance, which was built on a triangular island formed by arms of the river Po: marble battlements girded the shore, and shut in the little wilderness of woods, meadows, fountains and streamlets, gardens of rich flowers and fruits, all contrived by the ingenuity of Alfonso I., and serving subsequently to inspire Tasso’s description of the gardens of Armida.

Francesco hardly saw these glories and beauties as he stepped forward, almost too hastily for the marshalling of the official; and in reply to the duke’s address, demanded to speak with him privately. He had been personally known to his Highness before now.

Ercole walked aside a few paces into shelter of a blossoming bosquet of shrubs. Whatever he heard in that shadow had strangely changed his mien when he returned to where Leonora d’Este still sat looking toward the smiling palace.

“I must leave thee, *anima mia*; urgent business calls me to the city immediately. Order one of the barges to be got ready without delay,” he said to a



gentleman-in-waiting ; and a scowl gathered ominously on his already dark brows as he turned away, and Leonora fancied she could detect the muttered “ Traitors !” gnashed between his teeth.

After the noble figure of their duke stared the crowd in the piazza, as he galloped by with a detachment of his guards, and stopped presently at a convent gate ; the minute after, he stood beside a bed in the infirmary of the brotherhood. An old man, grievously wounded, had been found without in a neighbouring street—wounded unto the death, the most skilful monk thought ; and so did Altieri, the surgeon, to whom alone he imparted the secret that enemies had set on him because he had gained knowledge of a certain conspiracy against the duke and his dynasty, which they feared he would divulge ; and sought to ensure his silence by the dagger’s point.

Ercole heard it all—all he could tell—from the failing breath of the old trooper. “ Because I was one of the Reformed, and thou a persecutor, they thought I would approve their assassin’s plan. Take away that bauble, good brother,” to a monk who held a crucifix before him. “ The cross of Christ is in my heart—I want no other Saviour—I have the most blessed Christ—”

“Holy mother! the man is a heretic!” ejaculated the monk with the crucifix, rather over his breath. “If we knew that, it is long till such carion should defile our convent—”

The duke raised his eyes, and regarded the sycophant so sternly that he shrank back a pace. “Better to try to convert him than refuse comforts to the dying,” remarked Ercole; “he has been a loyal subject, and shed his life for us and ours as truly as ‘twere on the battle-field. Good friend,” and he turned to the prostrate old man, “would we could requite thee this service, but thy spirit is ebbing fast: nevertheless we will have a thousand masses sung for thy soul, to bring thee quickly into paradise through the aid of our Lady—”

By a prodigious exertion of his last strength, the dying man raised himself partially, and fixed his hollow, glittering eyes on the duke: “Your Excellence is most kind, but there are no need of masses for me; I shall go straight to heaven, for has not my Saviour died? I believe—that for the most blessed Christ’s sake—I am even now pardoned—all my sins”—the aged voice had broken, and he presently sank back exhausted.

It was one glimpse of the pure, the ennobling faith of the gospel in nature’s dire extremity,

brought before the bigoted Ercole. But he viewed it through the mist of a thousand prejudices and false beliefs.

“One reward,” gasped the poor old man; “tell them”—he glanced at the friars about—“not to molest me—with prayers—for I have my own Confessor—my Saviour;” and the worn face brightened into a smile.

“Let the heretic die in his heresy, good father,” ordered the duke; “but we will have the thousand masses for him, notwithstanding.” And he strode away.



CHAPTER XXVII.

DUCAL COMMANDS.

AND thus the plot, so comfortably hatching in the very heart of Ferrara, was stifled before maturity; and Ferrante di Gonzaga and the cardinal and the marquis, those highly noble personages who moved the puppets by wires from Milan, and whose honour was in nowise soiled by the concoction of assassination, heard of the failure as a piece of grievous ill-fortune, but hoped for better luck next time; and left their subordinates to perish from Duke Ercole's anger without a qualm, except for the usefulness of the agency thus destroyed.

Enter we the ducal cabinet in that moated castle before described, where the lord of Ferrara is engaged in public business with his secretary. Just now the work in hand is a despatch to Rome, to answer the pope's urgent demands that Ercole and his troops shall march southward to co-operate with the Duke of Guise against Naples. But Ercole knows well the unremitting vigilance of his

Spanish neighbours in the Milanese, and will not be persuaded to leave his capital undefended, even to engage in the holier office of keeping Alva's hands off Rome. Therefore the Holy Father is informed in the most respectful manner, by his dutiful son Ercole, that a murderous conspiracy has been but just disconcerted, which had for its object the destruction of the whole ducal family ; that for this and other reasons he must utterly decline to stir either himself or his soldiers from their vantage-ground in Lombardy.

“ His Holiness seems quite to forget every interest save his own,” was the duke’s remark, somewhat petulantly spoken ; “ not content with dragging me into this war sorely against my will, he now indicates to me the direct road to ruin, and would have me walk in it to please him. Think you these rotten fortifications of Ferrara would hold out forty-eight hours against the Milanese army ? And once in the grasp of the Spaniards, it is too fair a fief to be loosened by all the power of the keys.”

“ And your Highness has more than your share of the burden of the war already,” observed the obsequious secretary.

“ Ah, truly ; have I not engaged to supply the

army of Guise with munitions of war, and do not I guard for them the passage of retreat to their own country? For retreat they will," added the duke. "The strife is too unequal: would that I were well out of it! Our nephew Henry of France is able to hold his own, but I have everything to fear from Philip's vengeance."

He walked about the apartment perturbedly, a frown contracting his handsome, imperious face. It was rather hard that he, constitutionally a lover of peace, should be plunged against his will into an expensive and harassing war, whence he could gain no advantage, but incurred the extremest danger.

"Friendship or enmity—both wellnigh equally fatal," muttered he, his chin on his chest, as he looked downward into the deep courtyard, where stood the equestrian statue of Niccolo III. of the Esté line; "the Holy See hath damage even in its amity for its poor allies. Domestic broils without end—" and the regretful thought of an instant was given to the gentle wife who had suffered so much from his bigotry, though he fain would cloak that persecution under pretext of obedience to his spiritual guides—"domestic broils without end," thought Ercole, "and the Inquisition for my sub-

jects ; and now perchance the loss of the dukedom for myself: rebellion could scarce be worse punished than fealty is rewarded."

And the massive statue of his old ancestor, so tranquilly standing below in such a steadfast calm, representative of a man once just as full of cares, and of honours, and of ambitions, and of restlessness, seemed a tacit rebuke to the chafed spirit—seemed virtually to say to the unquiet ruler of Ferrara, "Wait, thou inheritor of my glories and of my toils—but wait, and thou shalt be calm as I!"

Perhaps Ercole felt the unspoken utterance: he turned abruptly from the window and rang a little silver bell which was on the table. A page from the ante-chamber entered ; and immediately afterward, on his summons, our old acquaintance, Francesco Altieri.

"Well, my young leech," was the duke's reply to his obeisance, "and what wouldst have for the service thou hast rendered us?"

"Your most excellent Highness sent for me," began Altieri, somewhat puzzled at thus being peremptorily required to name his price.

"Yes, yes—just to ask you this," returned Ercole. "Most essential service have you rendered

us ; we wish to reward it in a way chosen by yourself."

"Your Highness, I was but a messenger."

"A truce to extenuations," interrupted the duke, impatiently ; "we have no time to waste. We are willing to reward, be you but willing to receive. Say then, what would you have?"

"Your Highness' commands," promptly answered the young physician, as he stood respectfully before his prince—"your Highness' commands to leave your army and betake myself as a settler to the Calabrias."

Ercole fixed on him his sharp eyes : "To leave my service? Methinks thou shouldst be more than ever anxious to be retained in it, now that thou hast laid us under an obligation," he observed. "And wherefore to settle in the Calabrias, messer?"

"Because, your Excellence—" And Francesco, in few words, told of his betrothal for the past year and a half, wellnigh, and his desire to find a home for his bride. The duke listened attentively.

"But yet I perceive no reason why that home need be in the Calabrias," said Ercole, "while I can see many reasons for retaining so loyal a subject as thou in Ferrara."

“Your Highness knows not,” replied Francesco, “that I am of the Lutheran faith, and seek a place where I can worship my God as my conscience directs.”

“A Lutheran!” The moment’s pause which followed seemed to the young physician minutes long. His sovereign was steadily gazing at the hardy individual who dared present himself in the Ferrarese audience-chamber and avow himself a Lutheran.

“Then you have well said,” resumed Ercole, “that my dominions are no place for heretics! I give thee the required guerdon: leave my service and get thee to the Calabrias, and see whether our brother of Spain and Naples hath not even a warmer welcome for the ‘novatori’ than we have here!”

He drew over a set of papers and began to turn them uneasily with his hands, like one preoccupied with some thought. Gratitude was struggling with bigotry:

“And see, Messer Altieri—now that we recall it, thy name seems flavoured with heresy in its very sound—was there not some noted Lutheran so called?” He appealed to his secretary.

“Si, monsignor,” answered that supple person-

age, one of whose duties was to keep a prodigious memory—"agent for sundry German princes at Venice, and secretary to the English embassy."

"Wherein a heretic would find small favour now," observed his master. "His Eminence the cardinal of England* hath wrought wonders there, and brought back the whole nation into apostolic allegiance. But this Altieri in Venice, was he kin of thine?"

"My father's brother, your Excellence," said Francesco, feeling as if he was cutting off his last chance of favour. An attendant entered with a packet of despatches from France, just arrived by special courier.

"Then," said Ercole, negligently breaking the seal, "thou hast it by hereditary descent, which is not so blamable. Ha! what have we here?"

His eyes seemed to devour the lines of writing, but the healthy florid complexion of his face actually paled to a livid hue ere he had ended.

"Now, indeed, has the worst come!" said he, folding the paper half mechanically, as he handed it to his secretary. "A great battle of St. Quentin in Picardy—the French troops utterly routed—a second Pavia—the Duke of Guise must be recalled

* Cardinal Pole.

directly—and I shall have to bear the brunt of both Alva and Gonzaga. Holy Mother, what a fearful calamity!"

He would have totally forgotten Francesco's presence had not the secretary pointed to where he still stood: "This gentleman, your Highness, has not received your Highness' final orders."

"Ay—what was I speaking of?" Ercole passed his broad white hand over his bronzed brow. "I remember—yes, I was about to tell thee that Di Montalto is but a refugee, and cannot have much dower for his daughter; and as thou has rendered us good and loyal service, natheless thine heresy, we will of our bounty bestow upon the maiden five hundred gold florins as a portion on her wedding day."

And so Francesco was bowed out by the supple secretary, feeling in his heart more profuse of thanks than his lips had time to utter. And which was the happiest—the almost penniless young physician, despised as one of the "infected" by certain courtiers in the ante-chamber attired in brave raiment, or the powerful prince of Ferrara, seated in his cabinet to wrestle with the black care and fear that had issued from those despatches, and laid hold of his Highness like twin vultures?

Cause enough had Ercole for dread. The despatch informed him that in the battle of St. Quentin no fewer than six hundred French gentlemen, the flower of the noblesse, had been taken prisoners, so utterly broken was the French chivalry. The great Marshal de Montmorency had also fallen into the hands of the Spaniards: the Duke of Guise must be recalled, with his troops, to protect Paris. What remained to oppose the overwhelming Spanish force in Italy? A handful of papal troops, chiefly mercenaries, and the Ferrarese six thousand, against whom were pitted the armies of Alva and Gonzaga, the Dukes of Parma and of Florence. Well might Ercole call the tidings “a fearful calamity.”

Italian princes of that age held their territories by such slight tenure that the sceptre was always trembling in their grasp. Any shock of war might precipitate their feudal crowns to the dust; and Ercole might be pardoned for the first thought that his turn of decadence had come.

“Guise must leave me troops,” he soliloquized; “I shall be ruined without French help. Hire Germans or Swiss, after the example of the Holy Father? Nay, but my provinces would be snapped up by Gonzaga ere an arquebuss would have time

to cross the mountains. Oh that Guise had taken Milan, when it lay comparatively at his mercy ! But the Caraffas insisted on the march into Naples : this comes of gownmen meddling in campaigns."

It may be believed that Ercole's gold-fringed pillows were pressed that night by a weary yet restless head. Hour after hour, thinking, thinking ; travelling back over his policy, forward over its probable disastrous results : his wakeful eye wandering over the dark folds of the Flanders arras lining his apartments, whence loomed shadowy-woven figures, dismal as his fears. The rich crimson satin hangings and embroidered linen and silken coverlet of his couch were to him small elements of comfort that night. Few Ferrarese peasants, lying on their sack beds stuffed irregularly with husks of maize, and looking up to their duke habitually as to some half-celestial being, but enjoyed sounder repose than his, for they knew not the ducal sensation of "thorns in the pillow."

Some of his thoughts dwelt on the strange anomaly then enacting in the Papal States. Those German and Swiss mercenaries who were protecting the Holy Father against his most dutiful children of Naples were men who, for the most part,

despised his authority utterly in their own persons. Paul IV. was warred against by Alva, who would have lain in the dust to be walked over by the papal palfrey, so deep was his reverence for the see of Rome. He was defended by the troops of Albert of Brandenburg, the head of the Protestants of the Empire—soldiers who “jeered at the images of the saints, laughed at the mass, broke the fasts of the Church,”* and scrupled not to insult sacerdotal dignity whenever it suited them to do so. Ercole of Ferrara knew in his heart that such an anomaly could not long continue. He foresaw a speedy peace between Philip and Paul, even though his correspondents in Rome had written to him how the pope would inveigh against the Spaniards as “schismatics, accursed dregs of the earth.” Now to get himself advantageously inserted in such a peace was the main object of Ercole’s cogitations.

He was passing through the ante-chamber into his cabinet next morning, still brooding on the same, when he spied among the bareheaded gathering of courtiers and suitors, the physician Di Montalto, who was first honoured with an audience, being, in fact invited into the presence-cham-

* Ranke’s “History of the Popes.”

ber by the duke himself—an action which had a very significant value in the courtiers' eyes, and caused them to respect "il medico" rather more than previously.

"Well, my friend," said Ercole, familiarly—for he was commonly renowned by reason of his affable manners, and now was in better humour than for twenty-four hours past, as imagining he saw a way out of his political difficulties—"well, amico mio, how goes it? I hope you have settled all that affair of the betrothal with your son-in-law that is to be? I must see the young lady myself; perchance I may give her away at the bridal? Eh, Messer Physician, what do you say?"

Di Montalto's countenance had positively fallen at the idea. What if he were compelled to confess the humiliating truth that the rite must be Lutheran, for those whom it most nearly concerned were Lutheran? He actually blushed under the ducal gaze.

"Ha! I had forgotten," said Ercole, perhaps divining the cause of his physician's discomfited look. "I had forgotten that the young fellow declared himself one of the accursed 'novatori'—one of those heretics who have set the world in a blaze! But surely it cannot be the case that thy

daughter goes with him in his opinions—thou seemest so orthodox thyself, Di Montalto?" added the duke, rather maliciously, for he had more than a suspicion of how matters were in the physician's household.

"I try to do my duty to God and man, your Highness," replied the other, trying, with a bow, to conceal the sensations which made his very grizzled moustache quiver. "But, unfortunately, my daughter has imbibed certain of the new doctrines."

"Ay, ay, a maiden is but too apt to pick up the conscience of her betrothed," said the duke. "Thou canst scarce do better than ship them off for the Calabrias, and so relieve thy household of the taint which may fetter our favour. The dower shall be paid by our treasurer." And Ercole rapidly wrote a memorandum. "Leave us now;" and Di Montalto, with much obeisance, glided from the presence, which was unconscious of his profound bows, being seated with its back to the door and engrossed with the perusal of a state paper.

The deferential curve in Di Montalto's shoulders lessened perceptibly in the ante-chamber, and disappeared altogether in the street; and by the time

he reached “the most ill-smelling house in all Ferrara,” his mien was unbending as ever had stricken with dread the sensitive nature of poor little Bianca.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

RENEE'S BENEFICENCE.

AS the Duke of Ferrara had foreseen, the pope was obliged to conclude peace with Philip of Spain in little more than a month from the battle of St. Quentin. Very tenderly had the superstitious Alva made war upon his Holy Father, and very submissively did he impose peace. After advancing twice to the gates of Rome, and having the Vatican at his mercy, he gave back to Paul IV. every advantage he had gained, restored every castle and city which his Holiness claimed, and comported himself in all things as if he had been the conquered, instead of the conqueror.

Shortly afterward might such a scene as the following be witnessed in Rome. Paul the Fourth, "the servant of servants," seated upon a throne, high and lifted up; his tall, commanding figure dressed in purple robes of empire, his deep-sunken eyes glowing with the fire of youth in a frame which numbered more than eighty years in age: something of scorn, of suppressed hate and rage,

conflicting with politic affability and papal dignity in his still handsome countenance. And before him kneels the conqueror Alva, with profoundest reverence asking pardon for his conquest, with deepest abasement kissing the foot of his vanquished enemy, his cruel soul actually cringing before the octogenarian pontiff; for he declared, subsequently, that never had he feared the face of man as he did Paul's.

But what about Ercole of Ferrara in this peace-making? Alas! he has been quite left out: he might make terms for himself as best he could. Paul was, perhaps, disposed to punish him for previous lukewarmness; or perhaps—thought Ercole, apprehensively—he would have no objection to the Ferrarese territories forming a principality for his nephews, the Caraffas. It would be quite after the manner of the popes, this last notion.

Amid such wars and rumours of wars, in the autumn of 1557, were celebrated the humble nuptials of our betrothed pair. And, as at the former ceremony, little festivity was held: it was chiefly a festival of hearts. A custom of the age was, that the bridegroom spent the bride's dower in handsome clothes and ornaments for her, which were all exhibited at the wedding feast, we presume as a

stimulus to other maidens to follow her example; but Bianca had no finery to exhibit. The touching simplicity of the Reformed service—again in an upper chamber—was indeed a contrast to the marriage rite as elsewhere performed in Ferrara: with a deeper, holier import were these two lives joined, to walk together not only through time, “till death them did part,” but to love for eternity also.

This privileged thought has the Christian at his espousals, and no other man. The marriage bond is for all but Christians a tie snapped at death, or only productive of additional misery beyond; while for the children of God it endures, as far as spiritualized affection is concerned, into the countless ages of a glorious eternity. Francesco and his wife knew it—felt it: how inexpressibly endearing the belief!

But after a few brief weeks must come the needful parting for a time, while Francesco sets out for the Calabrias, to establish there the home he had promised Bianca. A long, uncertain journey, which could be lightened by few of those great consolers of absence—letters; but a journey through a country devastated by the late wars, and where even yet hostile troops were moving.

At last came tidings that Cosmo, Duke of Florence, had made peace with his neighbour Ercole. The poor new, little wife Bianca never had been so sorry to hear of any war being ended, for it seemed to clear the path for Francesco's departure on his perilous quest. But still war was going forward with Parma: she would fain keep him until that danger was removed likewise. Had not the gallant young Prince Alphonso gone forth at the head of all the Ferrarese chivalry against Ottavio Farnese?—he must have success with such a brave company; and if Francesco would but wait until then! So reasoned Bianca.

It came true in the first month of the year 1558, when a battle was fought discomfiting Parma, and peace ensued among all parties, and harassed Duke Ercole could breathe easily.

Francesco and his father-in-law had been by no means idle of late. For the remains of the army of Guise had gathered to Ferrara, destitute of everything, hoping relief from the known liberality and kindness of the Duchess Renée, daughter of their olden king. Sick, wounded, naked were not a few of these poor French soldiers—the raw material of victories, discarded like a broken tool when no longer wanted by the great

weavers of wars ; and starving were they all, even to the number of thousands. Every surgeon in Ferrara was employed by the duchess to look after their needs and supply them with suitable medical appliances at her sole expense.

One forenoon, having an audience with her on such matters, the young surgeon Altieri was present when the steward of her household brought in his accounts, her embroidering ladies working at a little distance, meanwhile, as usual.

“Your Highness will observe,” quoth the gray-haired servitor, bowing low, “that the expenses of this week past have been yet heavier than of the foregoing; and if I might presume to speak to your Highness—”

“I know what thou wouldest say, good Checco,” interrupted his mistress, pleasantly and with her sweet smile. “Thou wouldest say that the expense of all these poor soldiers falls heavily on our treasury: thinkest thou I have not read as much in thy glance for the last half-dozen audiences we have given thee? Thou dost grudge the golden ducats, good Checco, and reasonably enough, were the case other than it is. But, my faithful Checco, consider that these are poor Frenchmen and my countrymen, who had been my subjects now had I

a beard on my chin—nay, would have been my subjects but for the unjust Salic law.* And so it comes to pass that we think no sacrifice too great for these poor soldiers and no succour too costly. I should rather thou wouldst curtail our own personal expenses, good Checco, than stint these our kinsfolk of help."

The steward, privileged old attendant as he was, durst say no more; and his grudgingness for a little time was quickened, subsequently, more from dread of the duchess' displeasure than from approbation of her spendings.

"Is it not true, signor?" asked Renée, graciously, turning to the young physician who stood near, when Checco and his papers had departed. "Could I refuse aid to these poor creatures, victims of my nephew's ambition?"

"It would not be like your Highness' usual benignity to do so," replied Francesco, uttering a courtier's phrase with more than a courtier's sincerity. For Renée's beneficence had passed into a proverb.

"Nay, is it not in a manner my duty?" exclaimed Renée, with animation. "Debarred by a hard fortune from succouring 'the household of

* Brantome.

faith,'" she added in a lower tone, "shall I not at least succour 'my kinsmen according to the flesh?' Well, well, patience! The cause of Christ *must* conquer yet."

She resumed her conference with the young surgeon about his destitute and diseased French patients, but by and by came back to what was, after all, nearest to Renée's heart—the cause of her co-religionists, the Reformed. For them her sympathies never ceased to be drawn forth, though she seldom dared openly display her partiality, because of her stormy lord. But somehow she always contrived to be surrounded by the infected.

"And the latest news from Rome," quoth the duchess, "is that stringent measures of reform have begun there: a medal has actually been struck representing Paul the Fourth, under the type of the most blessed Christ, cleansing the temple of its salesmen and money-changers!"

"I fear that reform, in the mind of a pope who has been Grand Inquisitor, will mean also persecution," said Francesco, respectfully.

"He has given earnest of it already," the duchess replied, "by the increased activity of the Holy Office since his reign began. It is said that he even means to cite the more liberal-minded

cardinals, such as Morone and Foscherari, before the Congregation, on suspicion of heterodox opinions ; and when red hats cannot escape, what are humbler heads to do ? Messer Altieri, hold you still to your purpose of settling in the Calabrias, and thereby withdrawing yourself from these stormy times in the North ?”

Yes, he persevered in his intention. He did not care to utter what was the truth—that here he could not stay without a compromise of principle further than he felt would be faithful to his Master. But had he not the highest example of compromise before him ? He checked himself just in time.

“ Colonies of Waldenses have settled in Apulia and Calabria, under convention with the lords of the soil, and have preserved their religious privileges intact for nigh two hundred years,” said the young physician : “ I wish to find a resting-place among them, being somewhat of kin. My mother’s ancestors were from the valleys.”

“ But I believe,” observed the duchess, “ that they have not kept free of persecution without a variety of unworthy compliances ; at least,” she added, and her fair brow coloured slightly, “ they have been compelled to admit the Roman baptism

of their children, and to receive the holy eucharist at mass—”

“Truly unworthy compliances!” Francesco uttered when the duchess paused; “such as I trust my God will give me grace to refrain from. Most noble lady,” he added, repenting lest his unwary ejaculation should be misunderstood to contain a personal reflection, “I entreat you to believe—”

“Only the unguarded utterance of a fervid and honest heart,” rejoined Renée, looking kindly on his embarrassment. “Thy zeal may find reasons enow for cooling by and by, signor: thou has not had thy finest affections put to the torture yet.”

There was something so deprecatingly gentle in her tone and manner that Francesco, as he kissed her hand at departure, could willingly have kissed the hem of her robe in honour of that noble humility.

“We may give thee letters to sundry in Rome, which will bear thy travelling charges so far,” was Renée’s last act of grace toward her young brother in the faith.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MOUNTAIN OSTERIA.

NO TWITHSTANDING all the delays, the bitter day of parting came none the less surely. Poor Bianca took leave of her husband for his long and perilous journey with many a tear and many a lingering embrace; but even in the sorrow of separation she had a consolation of which the world knows nothing. Her heart was stayed on the faithfulness of God; no great evil could he permit to befall his servant, for over such he giveth his angels charge. And she could have the fullest confidence in prayer for Francesco, as knowing that he was one of the Lord's own people, dear unto him with a most special love.

Across the broad Ferrarese marshes, among the plantations of maize and millet and the innumerable sluggish streams embanked in deep channels, until, behind the pilgrim, the great city had contracted to a long, low line of roofs, broken by towers of churches, he rode as far as Bologna, where the mountains begin by a great gathering

of summits behind the minarets and leaning towers of the town. Here he lodged with certain brethren, after the manner of primitive times, having been recommended to them by friends in Ferrara.

“The underground railroad” of the United States was in that age anticipated by the Reformed. Hunted as persistently as any fugitive slaves from city to city, a cordon of communication from one haunt of heresy to another was needful. Many towns full of persecutors had yet one Mnason, a disciple with whom other disciples might seek shelter.

But desiring to push on as rapidly as possible to Florence and to Rome, our pilgrim stayed only a night in Bologna; nor visited any of its hundred churches, rich in sculpture and fresco, for he regarded them as little better than idol temples: men were apt at that time to hold strong opinions. Nor did he look through the oldest university in Europe; his hours were too precious for sight-seeing. Yet he contrived to ascend the hill whence he might have a last view of Ferrara far away to the east, beneath the long line of the Adriatic skirting the skies; and scarce glanced at the broad, level plains of Lombardy stretched northward, studded with villages and towns, even so far as

Mantua and Verona, which lay embossed on the land darkly, a mass of miniature towers.

Then slowly he turned his face to the hill-country of the Apennines, and entered the chaos of heights and hollows, of serrated peaks and ravines, which slowly ascends for many a mile to the highest range of the Italian backbone. The path—it was not entitled to be called a road—climbed by circuitous ways along the edges of olive-clothed dells, and under shadow of crags, and beneath gray walls of outlying monasteries, and past many little saint-shrines hung up in solitary trees or fixed in niches of rock; hour after hour attaining greater altitude, getting into barrener regions, where moss and lichen clung to the cliff-faces, despite wild storms, and where the view was savagely lonely of precipice and torrent and black tarn asleep. Those torrents hurried to the river beside Ferrara. Then he would emerge at the summit of some pass, and get a glimpse of the plain behind, sown with white cities thickly and seamed with wandering streams. Occasionally he arrived at a piece of table-land bearing a hamlet and some fields. In one such place he deemed it expedient to stop for the night, and went up to the gaunt, stone post-house to seek shelter.

Straw was the only bed, and black bread and olives, with a skin of sour wine, the only fare; but Francesco had been used to rough it, and heretics could never afford to be particular. He was asleep soundly on the straw in the corner of the great stone-room with his knapsack—or what answered to that modern convenience in the sixteenth century—under his head, when, toward midnight, he was roused by the tramp of many feet and loud voices entering the outer door. A military tramp he was sure; and some of the voices spoke a foreign tongue—German.

“What, ho! mine host! Rouse the house! Bring lights!” and the trooper strode to the kitchen fireplace, kicked the dying brands with his foot, and seizing a quantity of the straw which carpeted the floor, illuminated the apartment in a moment. “Come, mine host! wine for the defenders of his Holiness!” The nearly empty flagon on the rude table was drained of its dregs into his hairy lips in a moment. Francesco lay quite still in his corner, and unseen by reason of his envelopment of straw.

Others had come in, and bringing fagots from the wood-pile, soon had crackling an enormous fire, the breadth of the great chimney.

“Ha! wouldn’t his Holiness like to see a heretic roasting in the middle of that!” exclaimed one, following his remark with a horse-laugh.

“As for me,” said another, “I don’t wonder at his visit to Rome making a heretic of Martin Luther; I’m very much of the mind of the Jew who was advised by his friend to go there and see all the finery of the pope, thinking it must convert him; and sure enough he went and came back, and got himself baptized immediately; because he said nothing short of a perpetual miracle could keep alive a religion which was supported by such wicked men as the priests and cardinals.”

“Well done, Urich! thy tale and jest as usual. Comrades, we’ll have to help ourselves in this house, I foresee”—and he looked significantly at some dried meat and skins of wine pendant from the ceiling—“if so be that mine host comes not quickly. He doth sleep soundly, this fellow!”

Then roaring forth a song by Hans Sachs (the popular lyrist of the Reformation), either his music or his threats speedily brought down the owner of the establishment, a black little Italian, who actually cowered before these huge German guests, and with a profusion of bows would know their pleasure.

“Pleasure! why thou sleepest heavily as a cathedral,” said the former spokesman, in tolerable Italian, “or thou wouldest know that our pleasure is supper at this present. What else should troopers, hungry off the road, require at this time of night? So quicken thyself, for my men are rare eaters, and don’t understand being kept waiting. Meantime, a skin of thy vintage here.”

The expression of the Italian’s face, as Francesco could see it over the fire while cooking, boded anything but good-will to these blustering “oltramontani” who had thus stormed his dwelling at night’s noon. But whenever he had occasion to turn around toward the company its suavity was delightful to behold.

The Germans sat round the table with drinking-horns busy, or sauntered up and down the room conversing in their own tongue. Francesco, still lying with his knapsack under his head, could make out sufficient of their words to pick up allusions to their late campaign, and intimations of how things were going on in Rome.

“Paul was badly off for defenders when he sent for us,” said one. “The idea of us Protestants fighting against good Catholics, all for the sake of his Holiness!”



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“But did you ever see such fellows as those Roman arquebusiers? The very braying of a trumpet would disperse them, albeit their officers were all of noble blood!”

“I hope you valued the pope’s blessing properly, Hans?” shouted another. “It’s worth half our pay, at all events.”

Hans growled: “I would sooner have a ducat than five hundred of his benedictions!” And darker grew the Italian landlord’s face as this last observation was repeated to him in his own tongue by a soldier at the fireplace.

“And the Swiss from Unterwalden were a legion of angels!” laughed another. “I suppose gold chains are part of angelic outfit, since his Holiness gave them to the captains! Ah, mine officer, wert thou there?”

But the young man who sat at the table without touching the wine glanced at his underling sternly enough to repress the familiar speech on his lips, prompted perhaps by the aforesaid wine.

Not until their meal was over, and they were lying down to sleep on different parts of the floor, did the Germans perceive the stranger in the corner.

“Ho! what have we here? A spy?”

“A true man!” replied Francesco in their own language, springing to his feet. “A true man and a Lutheran.”

But he was prepared for the suspicious demeanor of the German officer, notwithstanding this declaration, the hostile scanning from his blue eyes under bent brows, for he knew how unsafe the times were, and how many doubtful characters loitered about Italy. Francesco walked forward to the firelight, to reveal his face thoroughly with the truth and honesty which he felt were in it.

“An’ thou wert one of the Holy Office spies, Herr Stranger,” growled a gigantic trooper, “thou wouldest find a short shrift and a shorter rope to the nearest tree!”

“I am sorry to hear you, friend,” replied Francesco, undauntedly, “talk so lightly of committing murder.”

“A truce to this,” quoth the captain, raising his lazy length from the bench where he had been sitting. “My men have witnessed an *auto-da-fé*, good sir, and are in no pleasant mood toward any emissaries of the Inquisition. But I can perceive, if I have any skill in reading the countenance, that thou art none such. I would invite thee, if thou hast had enough sleep, to some conference over the

remains of this flagon ;—to your slumbers, my fellows, and leave this gentleman and myself to settle matters.”

The troopers, who had crowded round the table, retreated to their cloaks on the straw. Francesco soon found that his companion was one of those free-thinking soldiers of fortune who sold their swords to the higher bidder, and who, while professing to despise the Roman religion and to be disciples of Luther, had, in reality, no faith at all, but a sort of deism. So long as Francesco dwelt on the abuses of the Church, the young man could talk glibly enough, but when he rose higher, into the atmosphere of spiritual knowledge and feeling, the soldier could not follow. He could recite passages of the “Eulenspiegel,” that celebrated German satiric poem, wherein the priests are ridiculed as sensual and gluttonous, keeping handsome and luxurious establishments, with fat butties and groaning supper-tables. These he much enjoyed, as likewise the belligerent passages of Luther’s works ; but the gentle spirit of the gospel found no echo in his heart.

“ It is true,” said he, “ what Ulrich von Hütten wrote in his ‘ Roman Trinity :’ ‘ There are three things that Rome does not believe—the immor-

tality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and hell.' I thought it an exaggeration, till I saw for myself."

"After all," responded Altieri, "it is not what Rome disbelieves, but what we believe, that is the great concern for us, and on which our eternal safety hangs."

"As to that," observed the German, "what a pity it is that even the Reformed camp is splitting up into divisions, and that their greatest doctors cannot settle on what should be believed! Theology does not lie in a soldier's way."

"Pardon me," said Altieri, "but I can imagine no closer concern of anybody's than how he may be saved."

"Oh, of course," answered the other, shifting his position somewhat uneasily; "and we all know the standard doctrine of Justification by Faith, that on which gallant old Luther so bravely did battle with the popedom: he had the spirit of a Paladin, and deserved to have been born a general, instead of a miner. I believe they all agree on that point. But they have had a regular split on the matter of the Real Presence; and Luther upholds something very like the old Roman doctrine, and Zwingli, the Swiss preacher, says the bread is

nothing but bread ; and where the captains differ so much, how shall the privates know which to believe ? ”

“ But that is also a question wide of personal salvation,” said Altieri. “ I think that Luther and Zwingli have met in heaven ere now, and wondered at their differences, while each adoring the most blessed Christ who purchased their eternal pardon. And, my friend, it is the great matter for us to get to heaven likewise, to be forgiven all our sins now, and to have the divine presence of the Saviour in our hearts as the earnest of glory hereafter.”

“ Yes, yes, of course,” replied the officer, pulling his fair moustache over his red lips. “ Of course that is the main matter. But we were speaking of divisions in the Reformed camp ; and the latest is that headed by Lelius Socinus, who has gathered the anti-Trinitarians into a body, and will have none of the Divinity of Christ, and runs a tilt at various other of the received doctrines, following the footsteps of Servetus ; and these all Italian heretics, too.”

“ God pardon them for darkening the light of his truth and dishonouring his most Divine Son,” prayed Francesco. “ Sir Officer, you and I may

never meet again; and I would say to you, permit not your mind so to run after these curious points of doctrine, or to speculate in heresies, as to forget to ensure the regeneration of your own heart by the power of the Divine Spirit."

"It is clear thou art no Socinian, at all events," observed the officer. "Methinks we might get an hour's sleep ere dawn; and as thou hast given me good counsel about my soul, I would give thee good counsel about thy body: be somewhat less free-spoken when thou goest further on the road; for now that Philip and Paul pull together, the conjunction of two such baleful stars omens a fiery persecution, and 'tis hard if aught in Italy be left breathing that opposes itself to the papacy. Every village and public place is swarming with spies; hence my men's suspicion of thee but a while since; and citizens disappear from their very homes, kidnapped into the Inquisition. Thou hast been slack at the wine-skin, friend;" the fact being that Francesco had not even touched it. "Well, as I intend to pay honourably—you see we secured our 'gelt' before leaving Rome—I may drain the horn; here's to thy health and safe journey, an thou wilt but be prudent, Messer Traveller."

CHAPTER XXX.

BRETHREN IN FLORENCE.

THE highest pass of these Tuscan Apennines was yet to be surmounted. There were no grand gorges, like the Splugen, no sublimity of desolation; but for miles the path wound away without habitation or sign of man, save a rude cross or cairn of stones, perhaps marking the site of some deed of violence. It was a country eminently suited for the transaction of banditti business, and is celebrated for such even to this day.

As he climbed, Francesco felt the wind becoming stronger, as if resenting the invasion of its nurseries on the hill-tops; and from transverse openings into glens it would burst furiously at times and belabour the solitary man, who struggled steadfastly on. He thought he should scarce have a harder bit of his journey than this. A final buffetting visited him at the turn down the western slope, but thence the greatest difficulty over. From naked gray crag he descended upon lichen and moss—from moss upon grassy nooks

where wild goats pastured—from these upon patches of vines; and now the streams all flowed downward to the Arno, not to the Po. Somehow he felt as if it were another link severed between him and home.

Soon hamlets and villages sprinkled the valleys, and flowers bloomed abundantly in sunny spots, for was he not approaching Fiorenza la Bella—the flower of Italy—set in the midst of its garden? Warm southern airs blew over the plains of the Arno, past mulberry groves and olive thickets and chestnut copses: a fair land and a goodly was this of Tuscany, flowing with wine and oil at the industry of its peasants.

Early one morning he looked from the hill which commands a view of Florence. Dominant over all, the vast dome of its cathedral curved grandly against the blue distance. He gazed upon the silver Arno spanned by busy bridges, and the many-coloured marble campanile rising amid a maze of palaces. All around were lands of the deepest verdure, blossoming into white villas and cottages, enclosed by lines of superb mountains.

Francesco descended into this panorama of loveliness, and an hour afterward found himself on one of the bridges aforesaid, being that Ponte Vecchio

built by so old an architect as Taddeo Gaddi of the fourteenth century. It was clustered closely over with shops and houses, and some of the busiest traffic in Florence went on in its narrow thoroughfare. The traveller with staff and knapsack made his way to a central house, a little workshop of a lapidary, adorned with handsome specimens of "pietro duro," the special jewelry of Tuscany, set out in cases to tempt the passer-by.

A customer was haggling with the gray-bearded proprietor of the shop over some article of this precious inlaid work. So Francesco merely glanced into the place, and, turning back, paused near by at the opening in the side of the bridge which revealed the favourite view of Michael Angelo. Framed like a bright-coloured picture in the old stone buttresses, he could see a massive brown castle standing out against a hill of rich foliage: clusters of houses and church-towers lined the slopes to the Arno: dense banks of verdure-inter-spersed woods, hoary crags crowned the prospect. Many dwellers on that bridge had seen the greatest artist of all time stop to gaze at the familiar view, and never grow weary of drinking into his eyes its details of beauty.

Francesco returned, to find the bargain not as

yet completed, so he looked over the specimens of "pietro duro," and refused to be served by the 'prentice lad who stood up from his bench at seeing the travel-soiled stranger, and who kept a sharp eye on him after that suspicious refusal. At length the two voluble Tuscans had ended their chaffering, and the lapidary, depositing certain broad pieces in his pouch, came over with a grave politeness to Francesco and inquired his pleasure.

"I would know the cost of these ear-rings," and he singled out a pair covered over so closely with turquoises that the gold setting was scarce visible. Then bending toward the lapidary while he peered into the jewels for the mark of their value, Francesco whispered a word or two.

The shop-owner raised his head slowly and fixed a piercing gaze on the stranger. "These ear-jewels are cheap at fifty *lire*," he said. "Stefano!" to the 'prentice youth aforesaid, who was within easy earshot of any conversation, "prepare thee, and take this casket to the Marchesana Pamfili, that she may choose certain of the rings; and hasten, lad, and bring back a ready account of what is trusted to thee."

When he had gone, the lapidary again took a long investigating look at the stranger. "Didst

thou not know Monsignor Carnesecchi?" inquired the latter. "I have heard him speak of thee as of a good friend in Florence."

"Since he became a heretic and fell under the ban of our holy father the pope, but few good Catholics know aught of him whom you mention," replied the other evasively, and taking out fresh ear-rings. "These, signor, I can let you have for thirty *lire*."*

"But Pietro Martire Vermigli has lodged in thy house," persisted Francesco.

A visible alarm was growing in the honest lapidary's spirit. "Before they became heretics, I will acknowledge my acquaintance with those persons," he answered, closing his last casket nervously.

"Come, come," said Francesco; "a little more, and thou wouldest deny even thy Master. Admit me to sit on thy working-bench for a few moments, and I will satisfy thee that I am a true man and no spy. Hearest thou not my speech—that it is no 'lingua Toscana,' but from the north side of the Apennines?"

"Yet, my good sir, there be villains north of the Po, as on the Arno," returned the lapidary.

The young physician laughed at the fallacy of

* About sixty dollars.

his own proof. But he had papers in his pocket enough to convince the most incredulous of his truth. And so it came to pass that when the boy Stefano returned, he found the stranger disencumbered of staff and knapsack, seated in the little upper room with the lozenge-shaped glass casement, and tended by the lapidary's own hands.

But it was not till nightfall, when the shops on the Ponte Vecchio were closed, and lights began to gleam from the darkening casements as though to challenge the flashing forth of stars above, that the gray-bearded jeweller and his country visitor had much converse. He brought Francesco to the uppermost room in his narrow house, where was another lozenge casement looking out over the Arno as it lapsed away peacefully beneath the old bridge and its freight of houses. And here the new friends, drawn together by that single bond of faith in Christ, talked till the night wore on and the stars had travelled much of their silvery rounds.

“I am obliged to keep very quiet, as you saw to-day,” said the lapidary, “and to be most cautious in my speech; there are so many spies going, an honest man hardly knows how to walk without setting foot in the trap.”

“And are many like-minded with you in the city?” inquired Francesco.

“A few—perhaps—” answered his host, coughing behind his hand, as he glanced round apprehensively. “It’s best not to mention names, for the very walls have ears these times.”

“Well, well, three stories above the river, I would fancy we should be free from eavesdroppers,” quoth the new-comer.

“Best to be safe—best to be safe,” observed the other. “But Florence never made much way in the Reformed doctrines; she lost her opportunity, I trow, when Savonarola preached to our fathers. Besides, we Florentines have had two of our citizens in the papal chair of late; we could not be so ungrateful as to spurn what promoted us to such honour.”

“Yet you boast the names of Carnesecchi and Peter Martyr,” said Francesco.

“Ay, and of two translators of the sacred Scriptures, Brucioli and Teofilo,” asserted the lapidary. “Oh, our city hath not been wanting in upholders of the truth, though she has no great number of Reformed,” he added.

“I do not remember the name of Teofilo,” remarked his guest.

The lapidary rose, and from behind a panel in the tiling of the wall drew forth two books, "My treasures," said he, "and enough to burn me should the Holy Office get scent of them; which I pray may never be the case, for I fear that I should dishonour my Lord and Master by a denial. Brother, those words of thine this day pierced me to the heart—'a little more, and thou wouldest deny the Chris'—because they are so true. Brother, I am one of the weak souls; I have not martyr's grace at all. I could not face the rack or the stake, nor, I fear me, even the prison-walls."

"If thy Lord tries thee, he will give strength for the hour," gently responded Francesco. And he told how he had himself been stretched on the rack at Locarno, and how the suffering, though intense, was no greater than he could bear.

"And I have been base enough to doubt thee for a moment, my brother!" cried the lapidary, with tears in his old eyes, and grasping the stranger's hand. "Nay; let me embrace thee, thou noble confessor of the faith!" and the impulsive Florentine kissed Francesco's cheek. "Thou art one of the brave souls who put all the world to shame, and shalt be crowned first on the resurrection morning."

This last revelation of Francesco's quite broke away every remaining barrier of reserve on the part of his entertainer. Had he been the first nobleman of Duke Cosmo's court, he could not have been honoured more by the lapidary ; for men commonly accord the highest admiration to those mental qualities which are most opposite to their own.

“I was about to show thee Teofilo's translation, signor ; it is the New Testament, published at Lyons in 1551, and is rendered in remarkably pure and choice Italian, whereas Brucioli is rough enough at times. Nevertheless, I would not give up this old Bible of Antonio Brucioli's for all the new versions they can print, for this it was which led me first into the truth twenty-five years ago, signor. And I am a very babe in Christ still, albeit my gray hairs should speak me a master in Israel. I fear at the very shadow of persecution ! But He who looked so gently at Peter will not discard me : that is my faith and hope, signor.”

“Still thou livest far below thy privilege, friend. God empowers thee to *know* that thou art redeemed, not for thine own merits, nor wilt thou be condemned for thy demerits or shortcomings ; for Christians are perfect through the comeliness of the blessed Christ upon them, now and for ever.”

“Ah!” said the lapidary, “so sayeth that good book of Messer Paleario’s, ‘On the Benefit of the Death of Christ;’ a treatise which hath been of unspeakable comfort to me at times—a most sweet, pious and simple book. See here, signor,” and he drew from the same sliding panel heretical “tratto,” eagerly turning over the leaves to his favourite passage. “How blessed are these thoughts: ‘He,’ that is God, ‘hath already punished and chastised all our sins in his own dearly beloved Son, and consequently proclaims a general pardon to all mankind; which everybody enjoyeth that believeth the gospel. . . . Oh, great unkindness! that we who profess ourselves Christians, and hear that the Son of God hath taken all our sins upon him, and washed them out with his precious blood, suffering himself to be fastened to the cross for our sakes, should nevertheless make as though we would justify ourselves, and purchase forgiveness of our sins by our own works; as who should say that the deserts and bloodshed of Jesus Christ were not enough to do it, unless we add our righteousness, which is altogether defiled.’ Signor Altieri, what think you?—are these not fine words?”

“Truly,” answered Francesco. “They have the

very pith and marrow of the gospel in them: methinks it will go hard but Rome fix her claws in the author. Milan is perilous ground for so noted a Reformer as he: 'twere well he placed the Alps or the ocean between him and the Holy Office."

And Rome did fulfil her vengeful will when she burned him on the 3d of July, 1570, twelve years forward from the date when Francesco was speaking.*

* The Presbyterian Board of Publication has published "*Aonio Paleario and his Friends, with a revised edition of 'The Benefit of Christ's Death,'*" by the Rev. Wm. M. Blackburn.



CHAPTER XXXI.

SAVONAROLA.

“*I*’LL tell thee a tale I heard of that devout and learned Aonio,” pursued the lapidary’s guest. “He being asked one day what was the chief ground on which men should rest for their salvation, answered immediately, ‘Jesus Christ;’ and being still asked the second ground, he still answered, ‘Christ;’ and being asked the third ground, he answered, ‘Christ.’ Truly he is a most pious Christian, not only in words and writings, but also in deeds.”

“Ah,” quoth the lapidary, with a great sigh, and bending forward his arms upon his knees, “the same Aonio is of opinion that in such times as these it becometh not a Christian to die in his bed. Alas, my friend, I feel not within me grace to profess the same. I am a most timid soldier in the heavenly warfare; one screw of that rack of which thou speakest a while since would make me say anything. Nothing astonishes me more than

the fortitude of some men. Thou hast heard of the noble Galeazzo Trezia, in the Milanese?"

And he went on to tell the circumstances attendant on his being burnt alive for the faith of Christ—the unflinching endurance of the torture, when some apparently trivial concessions would have saved him.

"I was in company the other night," said Francesco, "with a German officer, who had late news from the North. Since Alva has been made governor of the Spanish provinces, the persecution there is redoubled. Two persons were burnt alive only the other day—one a monk, who was placed in a pulpit beside the stake in hope he would recant; but he only proclaimed the truth most loudly, and was driven into the fire with blows and curses. No matter: the angels had benedictions for him."

"Well, well, pazienza!" exclaimed the lapidary, after a moment's pause. "Let us have patience. The Divine Lord sees it all. It only sets one longing for the New Jerusalem, friend." And in a low, melodious voice he commenced to chant that very ancient hymn, descended from the primitive Church, a voice of all ages—

"Cœlestis urbs Jerusalem,
Beata pacis visio,"

concerning the “heavenly city, the blessed vision of peace,” which is yet to come down from God among men, heaven’s last great boon to earth.

“ You see,” he said, pausing in the chant, “ I dare not sing one of Savonarola’s or Brucioli’s hymns, for they are deemed heretical, and who knows how I might be overheard? A boat passing the Arno below—or a spy in the next window—ah, my friend, men have to be cautious these times, when the Inquisition is all eyes and ears, and a grand inquisitor wears the tiara. But I find hymns enow in the services of the Church; and Latin is all right, they think, whereas Italian would be suspicious, and I’m in no good odour already, though I pay my dues so regularly, and my old friend Fra Battista lets me off very easily at confession twice a year. He’s half a Lutheran himself—the good old monk! and when I told him that I read the writings of Fra Girolamo, ‘Thou dost well, my son,’ quoth he: ‘that was a most holy doctor, and unjustly put to death.’ But, you perceive, he knew to whom he was talking. Signor, he would not be so open-mouthed to everybody, though he generally has a volume of the Vulgate in his sleeve; and I suspect he’s not thought much of as a confessor—he has been under

discipline, I know—but he is very aged, and they let him alone."

"It is wonderful," said Francesco, as if reflecting, "how many monks have simultaneously been taught the truth of God in their cells, in most unlikely places for the light to penetrate. Our church in Locarno, which, as I told thee, gave, three years since, two hundred families to exile for Christ's cause, began with three members in 1530—one of them a monk named Balthasar, who wrote to the churches of Germany for books; and from that spark God kindled a great flame. It may yet be so with Florence."

"Alas!" said the lapidary, "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful among us Florentines. Even the eloquence of Ochino produced but a temporary sensation; for when the heart is a money-bag, where is room for Christ? Ah, the Fra Savonarola knew us well. 'You ought already to be saints,' quoth he, 'having heard so much, yet it appears to me you will not understand;' and it is thus still."

"What! you have written copies of Savonarola's sermons?"

“Si, signor—copies descended to me from my father, who heard him when a young man, and when printed books were scarcely known. Here is his treatise on the fifty-first Psalm—a most sweet and comfortable writing for Christian souls. Thou knowest it, signor? Then thou hast drawn peace from these blessed words: ‘Here am I, a great sinner, to whom the Lord God has pardoned many sins, washing them out by the blood of his Christ, and covering them by his passion. Why, Lord, didst thou give me this knowledge of thy Son? Why this faith in him? Didst thou give it me that I might have the more sorrow; seeing my redemption, and not being able to attain it?’

“Signor,” observed the lapidary, pausing with his finger on the yellow page under the line, “that’s where most men stop who call themselves Christians. Seeing the redemption, but not knowing how to attain to it! And the Roman Church steps in and says, ‘Do so-and-so: take a pilgrimage, buy so many indulgences, keep your sins balanced and blotted by confessions and penances; so shalt thou grasp this redemption wrought by the Son of God.’ Fra Savonarola knew better: he knew that men had but to reach forth the hand of faith.”

Again the reader bent his eyes on the page, and finished the passage of the commentary which he had begun: “‘No, certainly; but thou didst give me this knowledge, that I, seeing pardon prepared for me, should take it by the grace of Christ.’”

It was a joy of no usual sort to this poor lapidary to meet with one before whom he could confess his faith, sure of a sympathetic response. Now his pale features glowed, his deep-set eyes kindled, the irresolute lines of his face seemed set with strength. He could have been brave in a multitude, but singly his soul cowered. Before we censure him, or secretly despise him, let us ask ourselves, How bold have I been to-day in confessing my Master, Christ? Have I manfully faced not stake or sword, but the lesser sharpness of a sneer or smile, for his sake?

Do we not all too much cover up our Christianity? Is there not too strenuous an effort to speak the language and walk in the ways of those to whom our Redeemer is an obnoxious stranger? And what is this compliance but another and less justifiable development of the timidity which caused many a weak believer in the sixteenth century to hide his faith. And had not bolder spirits taken the lead—men who counted not their lives

dear unto them—the world would never have been blessed with the Reformation.

The lapidary would not permit his guest to go away early in the morning, as he would have wished. “No,” said the timid man, “they might inform on me for entertaining secret envoys, and get me into I know not what trouble: thou must be seen by the neighbours—thou must come to look at the chief places in Florence.”

“But I bear letters from the Duchess of Ferrara to Rome,” replied Francesco; “I know not how they can brook delay: nevertheless I would not bring thee into trouble, my brother; I will stay until two hours before noon.”

“And I will direct thee to a certain house in Siena, through which thy road liest, and where are brethren who will receive thee joyfully,” said his host. And so next morning, while the early sun glittered on the snow-browed Apennines, and on the silver Arno, and over all the marble palaces of Fiorenza la Bella, the little shop was left in care of the apprentice Stefano, while its owner and his north-country guest sallied forth to look at the lions. The lapidary was very proud of his beautiful city, and especially of that masterpiece of architecture, the Duomo, which is described as a

very "mountain of precious marbles and mosaics," and before which the poet Dante would sit for hours together on the stone afterward engraven with the title, "Sasso di Dante," gazing up at the glorious pile. Beside it rose the campanile of Giotto, a most unequalled bell-tower, slender and "graceful as a lily of paradise." And palace after palace, tier above tier, looked over the wondrous piazza which held these two gems of art, the cathedral and the campanile.

But one spot was more sacred than all the rest, though unglorified by statue or mausoleum—the spot where the proto-martyr of Italy had suffered after he had fulfilled his course as her earliest Reformer.

"I am sixty-seven years old, and was but a bambino at the time," quoth the lapidary, smoothing his ragged beard, "but well I remember one or two incidents of that scene. I bethink me of holding my father's hand—he weeping the while; and before my memory comes the high black stake—a strong wind driving aside the smoke and flame, so that for long the dead body chained to the stake was not touched, but the arm was still stretched forth as if to bless the people. I remember before that, the majestic figure ascending the ladder gaz-

ing on the multitude, his lips moving: my father has since told me that he, the heresiarch, the contumacious son of the Church, repeated in that awful moment the Apostles' Creed. These are the only distinct memories I have of what I witnessed; but my father often made a tale for us children of the ordeal by fire which Fra Savonarola was willing to pass through to establish the truth of his doctrine."

"Was it not on the same spot as the burning?" said Francesco.

"Yes, signor, next to the Golden Lion, and opposite that street leading to Santa Cecilia. I have myself a dim remembrance of the huge pile of fagots and brushwood erected for the rival friars to pass through, eighty feet long, and as high as a man; a narrow passage ran its whole length. Oil and pitch and gunpowder were poured on the wood to make the burning better. I was but a bambino at the time," repeated the good lapidary—"only seven years of age—yet I think those sights did terrify me for all my life long! The most ordinary fire bringeth to my thought a martyrdom."

"But the friars did not enter the pile?"

"No, for the Franciscans and Dominicans could not agree as to the manner. First, the Franciscans

would not permit Fra Domenico, who was Savonarola's champion, to bring the crucifix with him into the flames; and when that was settled, they would not permit him to carry the host in his hands, lest their god should be burnt. Finally, a tremendous storm of hail and rain beat down upon the pile, and extinguished their fire: the Almighty had decided as to the impiety of such ordeals. But my brother, there is a listener"—looking round apprehensively—"and this is a spot of ill savour—let us come away;" and the lapidary began to move off.

Francesco perceived that the piazza was filling with its daily traffickers, and that a certain contadino, with his heavy ox-cart, had drawn near enough to be in earshot, had he so listed; while the dull countenance of the peasant gave him sufficient assurance that he could not act the spy. But it was not so easy to convince the lapidary that his fears overrated the danger. "My brother, my brother," he whispered, "thou knowest not the wiles of these men: Italy is full of spies. Two men cannot stop to speak without the Inquisition hearing. One cannot be too cautious;" and he stopped not till he had left the piazza altogether.

"But *there* is a thing also in my memory, for I

was a man when it took place," he said, pointing to the front of the old Palace of the Signory, on which appeared nine scutcheons of successive governments; and between the arms of the Duke of Athens and the republic was carven the monogram of the Redeemer of the world, recording the fact that in the year 1528 the grand council of Florence had formally elected the Lord Jesus Christ to be their king!

"'My kingdom is not of this world,'" repeated Francesco, gently. "They did not give him the rule of their hearts, which is the royalty he values."

The friends, now making their way to the skirts of the town, passed the grand Pitti Palace, and through divers strange old winding streets, dense as passages in a rabbit-warren. "And there," quoth the lapidary, in a reverential tone, "in the Church of Santa Maria Novella, is Cimabue's great picture of the most blessed Madonna, brought thither in proceesion two hundred and fifty years ago. Also certain frescoes by Fra Angelico."

When the young physician saw the cowled figure that passed by, shuffling in sandals, before the words were well spoken, he understood the reason of the reverence in the speaker's manner. His was a

scared soul, truly, “through fear of death all its lifetime subject to bondage ;” and yet which of us, in our safe century, dare censure him ? Francesco, who had himself endured the rack, could only pity him.



CHAPTER XXXII.

ON THE ROAD TO ROME.

THE first stage lay through a very beautiful country to Siena; passing through villages which looked lovely at a distance—white, nestling among vine leaves and lemon copses—but, near at hand, changed into rows of flat-roofed, ugly houses, filthy and dark within, with brown children rolling about in the sunshine outside, while the women spun or loitered as pleased them. Thus the human share of the landscape was not inviting, but Nature made up for such blots by her own exceeding beauty of hill and vale. What a wondrous colouring! what grouping of mountainous masses! Sometimes bare marble shafts and peaks—sometimes rounded, verdurous heights in the foreground; and the marvellously beautiful vegetation of Tuscany covering all the lowlands—almond trees drooping with blossom, orange and citron groves, copses of fig and olive—on the earth a perfect carpet of flowers. But the roads were atrocious, and there were few passengers, albeit

Francesco was on the northern highway to the world's capital.

Tuscan peasants worked in the fields here and there, shaded from the sun by their broad-leaved straw hats ; great, patient oxen were their helpers, with enormous strength and stolidity, ploughing, or harrowing, or drawing burdens ; harnessed by their huge, horned heads. Spotless cream-colour were they, of the very race which had tilled the soil around Mantua when Virgil was a boy. The bullock-carts might have had equally antique descent, their wheels being each a solid wooden circle, and the linchpin like the stem of a young pine.

The sun had set when our traveller approached Siena, that city enthroned in the very crater of a spent volcano, and whose streets gush up over the edge, and flow down the cone-sides in intricate lines of building bounded by the old walls. Here had the great preacher Ochino been born, and here had Paleario taught for many a year, ostensibly Greek and Latin, but a good deal more besides, which was not so harmless to Mother Church. Here also was the very seat and throne of St. Catherine, whose house is yet shown to adoring pilgrims, and who is to this hour the town's deity as truly as ever was Diana of the Ephesians.

Thence another day's journey brought Francesco to the edge of the papal dominions. Nearing Aquapendente the second forenoon, he looked out for some place of refreshment and shelter from the hottest hours of the sun. Seeing a flask and vine branches hanging over a doorway, he accepted the sign of hospitality and approached, though beneath the thick shade of some mulberry trees alongside were sitting soldiers, whom a slight development of his Florentine friend's caution would have taught him to avoid.

Some of the pope's guard, which fact he did not know, or he would have thought twice before entering the osteria. But having a good conscience, and being constitutionally void of nervousness, he sat down upon one of the benches to rest and enjoy the cool, while before him lay the wide landscape shimmering in a hazy heat.

“That fellow looks like an ‘oltra-montano,’ ” remarked one thick-headed trooper to another; observing through eyes which much wine might have muddled were it in the power of wine to do so, but it could as soon have influenced the wooden cask in which it was shipped.

“Ay, that he does—or like a north-country heretic; they say Lombardy is full of them,”

responded the comrade addressed, taking another pull at the flask. “ His clothes and his tongue are not Tuscan, I’ll warrant you. Pity our barisello is not here; he has a sharp nose for smelling out heresy.”

“ Ho! good friend,” quoth the principal trooper, standing up and beckoning him: “ you seem lonely over there; come and join us in our wine-skin. Nothing like good fellowship between travellers !”

Francesco hesitated for an instant: he was already uncomfortable by reason of their glances and whisperings, and knew not whether it were best to advance or retreat. His frank disposition and his tired limbs inclined him to comply with the invitation—prudential motives suggested the pursuance of his journey.

“ The fact is, my friend,” added the soldier, approaching him as he buckled on a rapier which had till then lain against the tree-trunk, “ we’re suspicious about you, and can’t let you stir till our captain comes back from the town yonder. So you may as well come and sit with us, and let’s while away the time in talk.”

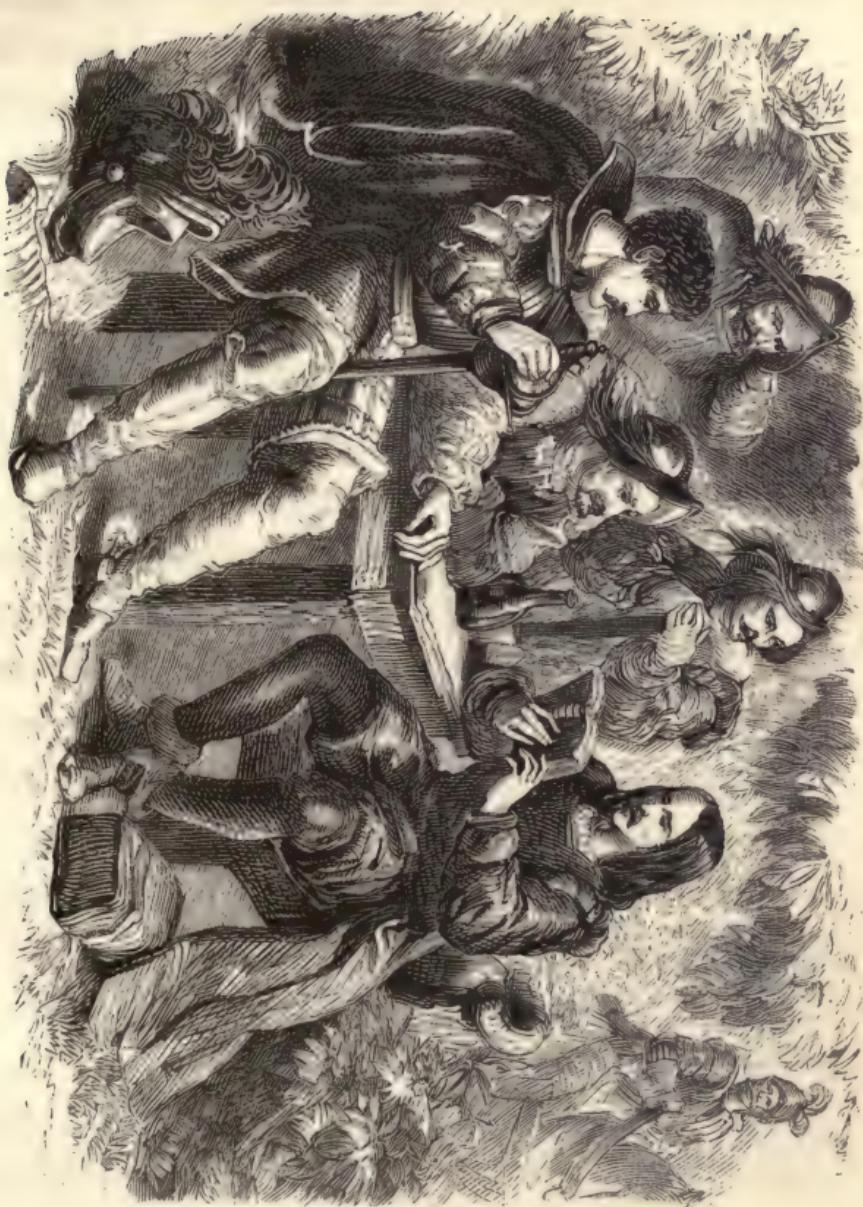
“ Certainly, good sirs,” replied the young physician, with an alacrity partly assumed, and looking

up at the rough, bearded faces which had gathered round. “I shall be ready to give account of myself to your officer: at the same time I warn you how you detain a courier from her Highness the illustrious Duchess of Ferrara, bearing letters to certain noble personages in Rome.”

For a moment the troopers glanced at each other; then the spokesman said :

“ We have that on your own word, messer; but be it ever so true, Ferrara’s heretical quarters to hail from, and as to the duchess, she’s known to be out and out a Lutheran. So you must wait till our barisello returns; no courtesy to you, messer, for we’d serve her Highness herself in the same way. Our Holy Father makes no apology to any one on his own territories, and we’ve got orders to arrest every suspicious person and search him.”

There was nothing for it but submission; and so Francesco unstrapped his knapsack and laid it by him on the bench, in some misgivings as to what results an examination of its contents might bring on his head. For he now remembered, with alarm, that the book of Gospels, done into Italian by Brucioli, and usually carried in his bosom, he had hastily laid in his pack that morning when leaving the inn where he had slept.





Had the deadliest adder been spied nestling among the travellers's poor clothes in the bundle, the worthy sergeant of the guard could not have expressed in countenance and gesture more hate and horror than at sight of the printed volume. A line of it he could not read; enough for him that it was a book, belonging to a man who acknowledged his origin to be Ferrara.

“ My friend,” said Francesco, gently, “ it is not a heretical book; it is a book highly honoured in the Church, and to be found in every convent library through Italy: nay, in the very Vatican thou wouldest find it in the Holy Father’s chamber! Stay, and I will read for thee certain passages to prove how good it is.”

And he lifted the volume from among the things in his pack, and, opening it on the table, turned over some leaves.

“ A book which the Holy Father would have in his chamber! and in every convent library!” muttered the sergeant: “ truly if that be so, no good Christian can be harmed by having it or hearing it. Go on, messer, so as it be not as stupid as worthy Friar Ambrogio’s sermons.”

“ Whereat I fell asleep last Sunday,” observed a soldier.

“This is a book of histories of the life of the most blessed Christ,” said the traveller. “And for that ye are soldiers, I will read you somewhat about soldiers, because there is here what suits each man to his profit. Behold, then, what Roman soldiers did to the most blessed Christ our Saviour;” and he commenced to read the nineteenth chapter of John’s Gospel, at the first verse, slowly and reverently.

As he proceeded the attention of his listeners became more fixed; even the wine-skin was neglected: their black eyes presently glowed and lightened as every fresh insult to the Lord of life and glory passed the reader’s lips. The fascination of the most thrilling tale of all time was upon them. Suppressed murmurs bespoke their interest: “O che meraviglia! what marvel! Ahi poltroni! ah, the villains! who would have believed it?—who ever saw the like?” And when the chapter was ended their exclamations were yet louder.

“My friends,” said the reader, “behold what the most blessed Christ suffered to redeem us and to open to us the kingdom of heaven! Think you he could not have had hosts of angels in a moment from the skies to defend him? But if he had not endured all this, we could not have been saved.

Behold his love! Will you not love him in return? He stretches out his arms from that cross—his hands pierced and dropping blood: your sins nailed him there!"

"Well, I never forget to say a pater and five aves every night," said the sergeant; "and the blessed Virgin has a special care of those who remember her; and I never pass her shrine without an obeisance, and a prayer if I've time. That was a fine story of the brigand who always prayed to her before every robbery; and when at last he was hanged for his misdeeds, she kept her white hands under his feet for two whole days, holding him up invisibly; and when the executioner tried to finish his job with the sword, she turned aside every blow. So you see the benefit of remembering the Madonna!"

Just as this notable legend was finished, the clatter of hoofs announced the return of the barisello, who flung himself off his horse into the group, saying, "What have we here?"

All his danger, partially forgotten in the excitement of his reading, rushed back on Francesco's heart with a sickening shock. He raised his eyes to the bronzed face of the man in whose hands lay his fate. Where had he seen it before?

Gravely the captain listened to his sergeant's recital, and inspected the things found in the pack. Then he demanded to see the letters entrusted to the courier by the Duchess Renée, which Francesco delivered up under protest. But the barisello merely looked at the seals and gave them back. Then he walked away a little distance under the mulberry trees, out of hearing, beckoning the prisoner to follow :

“Dost not remember Andrea d'Agnolo, in the guard-room at Locarno? For the sake of all thy suffering then, comrade, I'll let thee off this time. Pack up thy bundle and be off, for I can't always answer for my fellows ; and if thou hadst not those letters with thee, I should bring thee before the prior at yon convent,” pointing to a square white building emerging from thickets of olive and cypress on the slope of the hill, not far off, “that he might judge of the contents of that book I see with thee. I've little doubt myself—though I can't read a word, thanks to the blessed Madonna! —I've little doubt but it's the 'Vangelo, the gospel-book, which would get thee the lowest dungeon in the Inquisition an' thou wert a cardinal. Take my advice, and before going a mile farther burn it under the fagots in mine host's fire ; for thou

mayest not meet an old acquaintance at every hostelry."

"I thank thee for thy kindness, good friend," replied Francesco; "but, as touching my book, the best I could wish thee for the next world would be that thou shouldst grasp the hope and the faith that are in it; then wouldst thou not counsel me to burn it, but rather to keep it most sacredly, as the words of my best Friend and only Saviour. Mayest thou, good barisello, yet know in thy heart the preciousness of this word, which bringeth salvation, and embrace the most blessed Christ in the arms of thy soul's desire."

D'Agnolo was lounging back to his troopers, and made no answer.

"Comrades," he observed, "I've spoken with this fellow, and find he is what he represents himself; and so we will allow him to pursue his journey. But it was a proper zeal to detain him until ye were assured of his nature and business. Now, messer, as thou hast perchance had enough of resting from the noontide heats, thou mayest begone."

One of the guardsmen passed with him from beneath the mulberry shade and a little way along the road. A beardless youth, whose eyes had glistened with feeling a while since as he heard

the altogether new story of the gospel. “I fain would hear it again, friend, but I may not linger; it gave me a pleasure such as never did tale before or legend of saint. Friend, I would not have pierced the blessed Christ with my halberd, had I been there. Friend, thinkest thou it is all true?”

“Written by the finger of God himself!” was the reply. “And because of that most holy death of the innocent for the guilty, are we free from all sin and from the eternal pain. Believe this: take it into thy soul, and love Him who so loved us as to die for us.”

“I will go to the church this very night, and look at him hanging on that cross,” said the young soldier. “Farewell, friend.”

“You need not wait till then to think of him,” said Francesco, as they parted.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

LUDOVICO PASCHALI.

HANY pens have endeavoured to depict the desolation of the Campagna of Rome, upon which Francesco entered from the latest spurs of the Apennines. A great silence and dreariness hangs over the vast rich plain; yet the heaven above is bright and clear, the soil fat and fertile. In ancient times the Republic and the Empire drew from it vast wealth by agriculture; but centuries of disuse and papal misgovernment have reduced the population to a few scattered groups of peasants in miserable huts, and the cultivation to a few patches of arable land. It is the same under Pius the Ninth as under Paul the Fourth, for the papacy is unchangeable.

Little shrines and great stone crosses dotted the roadside at intervals, as usual. From a long way off our pilgrim would discern one of these, and make its attainment a sort of object in his dreary flat walk. Sometimes in a knot of trees one trunk would have a hollow, dressed up and lined gayly

when the now faded trappings were new, and enshrining a tiny image of stone or metal or painted wood. Before this devout Catholics were wont to pause for a bare-headed prayer. It was precisely the want of this bit of devotion which caused Francesco to wonder who those two travellers at some distance before him could be, for they had passed three saintly shrines and a large cross without stopping, or in anywise displaying reverence—a very unusual, in fact an altogether improbable, omission on the part of orthodox Romanists. Could they be, even as Francesco himself, refraining from idolatry conscientiously?

He would draw near and observe them more narrowly. Their pace was so rapid that his own had to be much accelerated to gain upon them. He thought he could notice a certain foreignness of attire and general aspect after he had attained a closer inspection. Presently they paused in the shade of a strip of copse, for the noontide heats were strong; they sat upon the grass and seemed to eat somewhat from a wallet borne by one. Francesco shortly reached the spot, and seeing them both young men, with the frankness of his own youth addressed them :

“Buon giorno, good friends: I have been de-

sirous to come up with you, for I perceive that you did not bow before the images or crosses on the wayside—" He paused, for he travellers exchanged a glance, and the idea instantly struck him that he must not commit himself with these total strangers ; one of whom, at least, was thinking the same.

" Nay," responded the elder of the twain, " but we had once noticed that you yourself refrained in like manner."

" He seems an honest man," quoth the other traveller, whose semi-military bearing had struck Francesco, and whose glittering eyes had been reading the new-comer's face and mien. " He seems an honest man, Stefano ; why not avow—"

" Thine avowals, my brother Ludovico, will one day ruin thee," said the other in a suppressed tone, and putting a hand on his arm. " Spies are abroad, and men cannot be too cautious."

" I have come from Ferrara," said Francesco, " and have bowed knee to no shrine along that road. If your motive be the same as mine, we are brothers in the true faith of Christ."

" Well and freely spoken!" exclaimed the traveller Ludovico, springing up and clasping his hand warmly. " Thou art a Lutheran, and so are we : we hold the truth of God written in his Holy

Scriptures as above all priests and popes—our sole rule, our sole knowledge of salvation.”

Francesco returned the pressure: “Even so, my friend; I am even as ye are. God has granted me knowledge of his free grace from childhood until now. I hail you heartily as brethren.”

The cloud of doubt did not remove from the more worldly-wise Stefano for some little time, while Ludovico with characteristic ardour took their new acquaintance cordially as he declared himself. But when Francesco exhibited the credentials of the Duchess Renée in answer to the unexpressed suspicion, even Stefano was satisfied.

That noontide rest was lengthened so much by the pleasant converse of those beneath the trees that shadows were growing long on the plain when they bestirred themselves again. The bond uniting Christians in that age was of a strength and thrilling power which we hardly know. Danger hemmed them in, as by a narrowing circle of ever-advancing angry tides; and the souls within that circle were driven very closely together, and very near to the great common centre—their divine Master.

“My brother Stefano Negrino and myself are pastors of a Reformed church,” Ludovico said.

“We are on a mission to certain brethren in the South of Italy.”

“Perchance to Calabria!” exclaimed the young physician, eagerly.

“Even so. We have been deputed by the Italian church at Geneva to visit the colonies of the Vaudois, and assist in building up that portion of Christ’s Church, which has in some respects wandered from the simplicity of the truth.”

“But, my brother,” interposed the gentler Stefano, “they have been sorely tempted and tried.”

“No temptation,” averred the sturdy half-soldier Ludovico Paschali, “is sufficient warrant for concealment of the faith and a sinful compliance with the superstitious practices of Rome. They have been guilty of a very general lapse, in taking the eucharist at mass and permitting the baptism of their children by Romish priests, while yet they secretly hold that the mass is a horrid impiety, and reject purgatory and saint-worship. But what saith the worthy Doctor Ecolampade in his Remonstrance?” and Paschali drew from his bosom a roll of parchment, whence he selected a page: “‘It becomes men who know they have been redeemed by the blood of Christ to be more courageous. In saying Amen to the mass, do you not deny Christ?’

For if these masses make satisfaction for the sins of the living and the dead, what is the consequence, but that Christ has not made it sufficiently and that he died for us in vain?" Thou seest then, my brother, what dishonour these Calabrian churches have cast upon their Lord: they need a reformation, though Reformed."

"I grieve to hear all this," said Francesco; "for my purpose was to settle among these Vaudois colonies, to which I have certain ties by blood, and with whom I had heard that freedom of conscience was established in some sort. Perchance portions of the colonies may be freer from the taint of Romanized worship than others?"

"They settled on the soil," said Negrino, raising his thoughtful face, "under convention with the signors who owned it, and who guaranteed to them self-government by their own magistrates and pastors. This convention was ratified by Ferdinand of Aragon, King of Naples, so late as the year 1500: methinks it ought to be security enough for the peaceable exercise of religion, but, alas! the theory is better than practice. The clergy have long complained that these Calabrians are not like other people, in that none of them become priests or nuns, and they concern themselves little about

chantings, wax tapers, or images—that they had unknown foreign schoolmasters, to whom they paid a deeper respect than even to the secular clergy. Now these suspicions being afloat, the Calabrians have been compelled to be very cautious, lest the Inquisition should be down upon them; for it overrides all laws and national institutions, as remodelled by the Cardinal Caraffa. Hence the state of things which our brother Paschali describes. A people within a people, they have been seeking to blot over the line of demarcation as much as might be, for self-preservation's sake."

"But now, when the Christian world is arising against Antichrist as one man," exclaimed the vehement Paschali, "shall they sleep the ignominious sleep of carnal security longer? shall they not add their voice to the universal protest? When this peninsula, the very seat of the beast, is stirred from its centre to its verge with the great Reformation movement, shall the Calabrian colonies, who have possessed the light of truth so long, be not rather ashamed of the cowardice which has kept it so much concealed?

"Ah, my brother," said Negrino, looking at the flashing eyes and kindling face with a certain affectionate sorrow, "methinks thou art a candidate for

the noble army of martyrs. Methinks in laying by helmet and rapier thou didst not put aside the martial spirit."

"Nay, my Stefano," said the other more calmly; "but surely a man may have ardour in Christ's army, and for the Captain of his salvation as ever for earthly general. My warlike instincts may serve me in good stead against spiritual foes; and if I 'please Him who hath chosen me to be a soldier,' I care little for aught else."

"But the day is wearing," observed Stefano: "the sun is wheeling westward. If we would reach Rome to-night, we had better resume our way."

The fragments of the meal were stowed away in the wallet carried by Paschali, and the three travellers passed from the copse to the open road again. Before them, afar, rose towers and spires of the Eternal City, crested with the wondrous though yet unfinished dome of St. Peter's.

"Ay, the great Babylon," muttered Paschali, striding onward, "drunken with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus. Hast thou heard of the latest martyrdom, brother?" turning round to Francesco. "Godfredo Varaglia, the Capuchin preacher, has sealed his testimony with his blood, not a month since, at Turin."

“What! he who once preached so vehemently against the Waldenses?”

“Even so. While arguing with our pastors, God gave him power to receive the truth. Fra Bernardino Ochino, general of his order, was of like belief, and they worked together in publishing Christ’s gospel, until Rome became so roused that Ochino had to fly. Varaglia was arrested, and on making some abjuration of heresy in general terms, was kept in Rome for five years. Afterward he went to France with the papal legate, and thence retired to Geneva, where his heart had long been with Calvin and Beza. Again he went among our brethren of the valleys, but it was now to preach the faith he had once laboured to destroy, and the long arms of the Inquisition, stretching over the frontier, seized him. When questioned before the tribunal, he declared that the number of preachers ready to enter Italy and publish the gospel was so great that wood to burn them could not be found.”

Again Paschali took the lead, as if his ardent spirit was hastening onward to his scene of labour more rapidly than his body could travel. With head erect and military marching gait, the ex-soldier passed forward: Negrino, older and less fiery, kept with Francesco a few paces in the rear.

“The pastor hath been in the army,” observed the latter, indicating Paschali by that pointing of the thumb which is so characteristically Italian.

“He was trained for it,” was the reply, “but quitted it for Christ’s service while very young; studied at Lausanne for some time; and when the Calabrese Vaudois applied for an Italian preacher, as well as the occasional ‘barbe’ from the valleys, he was found so eminently suited by zeal and by acquirements that he was at once nominated by our Genevese pastors to accompany me. Poor fellow! he has much to sadden him just now: he was betrothed two days before his appointment to a certain maiden, Camilla Guarina, whom he truly loves; yet at the call of duty they severed, and she, more valiant than ever was the lady of knight going into mortal combat and buckling on the armour in which he may receive the death-wound, committed him to her God for this perilous mission, not knowing if she shall ever again behold him in the flesh.”

A thrill of sympathy struck through the listener’s heart as he heard of this quiet heroism—not very infrequent in an age when principle constantly demanded the highest sacrifices, but still appealing to the deepest feelings of human nature.

“A nobler spirit never breathed,” quoth Negrino, in the same undertone. “He counteth not his life dear unto him, so he may finish his course with joy, and gain the great Master’s ‘Well done, good and faithful servant!’”

The interest attached to Paschali was indefinitely increased, in Francesco’s eyes, by this item of knowledge about his former life. He bent instinctively before the noble, self-sacrificing soul which for Christ’s sake separated itself from all it held dearest on earth, and went forth to carry the banner of truth into a region where the very air of common life breathed peril.

And the name of Camilla Guarina—the betrothed maiden whose self-sacrifice was equal, for she remained at home to suffer in monotony and silence, while Paschali passed into exciting scenes of action and endurance—should not be forgotten among those of the women who laid their hearts on the shrine of the Italian Reformation. She never saw her lover on earth again.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ROME IN 1558.

ACROSS the blackened bosom of the Campagna marched our travellers, with that aerial dome for goal. Michael Angelo was yet its unpaid architect, toiling day after day at colonnade and arch and pier, elaborating the minutest details with the grand exactitude of genius as the vast pile slowly grew, which took more than a century to mature into full magnificence. But few sight-seers visited Rome at this era. The world's business was too stern to admit of pleasure-tours; and the concourse of outer "barbarians" who now annually admire the Eternal City was utterly unknown. For something apart from archaeology or aesthetics did the pilgrim from North or West cross sea and mountain to the centre of the Christian world, the capital of the faith, the seat of the earthly vice-gerent of the Supreme.

"Accursed Babylon!" muttered Paschali in the very Porta del Popolo, unawed by the magnificence surrounding. And though his tongue was silent,

his companions could read the same denunciation in his uncompromising face as they passed along crowded streets, and under the walls of the immense fortress of St. Angelo, raising its gray battlements far above their heads. Two short years afterward, what a scene for him in the court adjoining! What a presentation before the hierarchy of pope and purple cardinals, and before the more glorious, though invisible, hierarchy of heaven! what a spectacle for angels and for men!

But the future is veiled from us in mercy. Paschali was not to be unnerved for present duty by any prevision of his mortal fate.

A vast crowd is gathered before one of the half-thousand churches; it was that higher order of ecclesiastical building intituled a basilica, of dignity sufficient for pontifical ceremonies. And the very crowd is characteristic of Rome. Nowhere else such a medley of ecclesiastic costumes, such variety of cowls and gowns and cords and caps, appertaining to all orders of regulars. Long flowing robes of some, coarse brown cloaks of others, white tunics of a third order; all most blessed, and conferring on their wearers the privilege of independent idleness.

“Ditemi che c’è? Tell me, what’s all this

about?" asked Francesco of his nearest neighbour, whose horned cowl and patched rochet bespoke him a Capuchin. The friar turned on his questioner a pair of lazy brown eyes, as he replied :

"Oh, it's only our Holy Father borne in his chair of state. As you're evidently a new-comer, I don't mind making room for you, if you care to see the show;" and he moved to let Francesco on a step which he occupied as vantage-ground. While thanking him, the obliged person could not but feel the language rather more irreverent than he would have looked for in a monkish habit, but he soon found that in Rome this was nothing new.

The crowd were talking abundantly among themselves, and now and then sending up a jet of applause into the air around the old church towers. The murmur of the garrulous Romans, separated into its constituent elements of gossip, was not always complimentary to their spiritual father and his court. For instance :

"I say, Jacopo, did you see how angrily the pope glanced at his nephew Caraffa, when he drew near to him at the doorway? The old man is beginning to see through that hypocrite, and 'tis time."

"Nay, but they say that lately, when the cardi-

nal was ill, the Holy Father going to visit him suddenly, found him in very bad company. His Eminence has longed loved gamblers and drinkers more than learned doctors and priests; how he managed to hide it from the sharp eyes of Paul is the question."

"Oh, that's his camp education," put in a little shorn Benedictine, clothed in black woollen gown. "Why, the Holy Father himself said of the cardinal, that his arm was dyed in gore to the elbow."

Paschali uttered a sort of groan. "And are these thy princes, O Rome?" was his mental ejaculation.

The Capuchin stared as intently as his sleepy brown eyes could: "Art thou ill, friend?"

"Not in the least," responded Paschali, curtly. "But a man may groan over sin, especially when throned in high places, my friend."

"Oh, if that be thy fancy," observed the monk, pushing back his funnel-shaped cowl, "thou needest not be silent night or day in Rome; we're used to it here; and yet the Holy Father himself is all a pope should be. But human nature is human nature, we all know;" and he shrugged his shoulders cozily under the patched cloak. "I fancy thou art a stranger, or this would not be so

new to thee, and thy groanings would be kept for thyself.”

“But the pope—he is a conscientious man : how can he tolerate this blood-stained Caraffa ?”

“Hist ! speak gently, friend. Though everybody knows it, 'tis a matter for whispering. Now, in the first place, Caraffa is his nephew, and you wouldn't have the Holy Father without natural affection ? Then the cardinal had cleverness enough to feign a deep remorse for his past excesses, and was more than once surprised—accidentally of course—by his Holiness prostrate before the crucifix, and confessing apparently sins. Being the sincerest man alive himself, our Holy Father could not suspect such playing of the hypocrite, and gave the opportune penitent the red hat he sought, took him deeply into his councils, and often praised him as the ablest statesman in the papacy—a character which Caraffa vindicated by plunging headlong into wars with the Colonnas, whom he plundered, and with Spain and Naples, who plundered him back again.”

“And what of the government of the Church all this time of wielding the secular sword ?” asked Paschali.

“The Church ! oh, she is taken good care of :

don't you know the promise to Saint Peter, that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against' her? And his Holiness is a pope most zealous for the faith; never was the Holy Office so busy, never was heresy more determinately rooted out with an unsparing hand, from the highest places as well as from the lowest. The cardinal's purple is no protection: Contarini could not now palter with heretics as he used; Morone and Foscarari have seen the inside of the new Lutheran prison beyond Tiber: even the cardinal of England has fallen under suspicion; nay, the tribunal of the Inquisition itself has required expurgation, and laymen of undoubted orthodoxy have been introduced as judges instead of suspected clerics. Ah, my friend, there will not be a heretic breathing on this side the Alps in five years, if his Holiness works as he is now doing. I only wish he could plant the same all-powerful machinery on the other side."

Had the heavy brown eyes been a trifle sharper, they might have read in the stranger's face a very unmistakable dissent from his enthusiasm in favour of the Holy Office; but the good monk never doubted he was speaking to a staunch Catholic like himself—one who could see discrepancies of

practice in his spiritual superiors, but never deem them the less worthy of all reverence, or the less infallible in their ecclesiastical capacity.

“ You see,” continued the talkative Capuchin, “ I can’t bear those Lutherans. They would take the supremacy from our Rome—no more universal bishop, forsooth ! What would become of us all here, I should like to know ? We might shut up half our churches and convents. That’s the great thing with those ‘ novatori ;’ and I just wouldn’t leave one of them breath to be crowing his blasphemies in our ears and picking the Church’s pockets of her dues.”

Paschali was with difficulty silent ; only the strongest sense of the duty of self-preservation restrained his speech. Negrino, who feared that his ardour would betray him into imprudent utterance, hastened to interpose :

“ And these Lutherans of whom you speak, my friend—have they been numerous in Rome ?”

“ I should rather say not,” replied the other, with a low laugh ; “ though there are accessions most days, brought in from all parts to that palace of theirs beyond the Tiber, whereof I spake anon, and which our present Holy Father has erected for their accommodation.”

“Are we likely to see the pope to-day?” inquired Negrino, when the monk’s chuckle ceased.

“Oh yes; he will come out to give us all his blessing, don’t you understand?” And herewith the Capuchin picked from the pouch of a mendicant Franciscan beside him, who was returning home from his morning’s work of begging victuals, a portion of bread and meat and began to eat. The action struck the rude sense of humour in the lookers-on, and hearty laughter followed the discomfited look of the Franciscan, as he found how involuntarily he had ministered to his brother’s need.

“Never mind, good frate, thy pouch is tolerably swollen yet.” “Fasting a meal will do his fat cheeks no harm!” and similar remarks greeted him on every side, till he retreated to rid himself of the bulging provender in the safe repository of his convent.

At intervals these outsiders heard peals of solemn chantings from within, and wafts of incense through the wide, folding doors visited another sense. At last came forth the centre of all eyes, Paul the Fourth. Borne in a great, gilded chair, beneath a canopy of white satin heavily fringed with bullion, the old man’s bony hand perpetually

raised in the benedictory attitude, his lips moving with benedictory words, but no trace of smile or of blessing on the thin anxious face or in the restless, fiery eyes. Whatever this Holy Father could do in the way of making others happy or blessed, he had certainly kept but little of such enjoyments for himself, to judge by appearances.

No, not all the ascetic observances of the Theatine Cardinal (as he was called, because of founding that order), not all the zealous preachings of John Peter Caraffa, not all the bitter bigotry of the Grand Inquisitor, had sufficed to make of Pope Paul the Fourth aught but a miserable old man. Disappointed in his schemes of ambition, thwarted in the nearest relations of life by his designing nephews, defeated in every war, he was victorious on one field alone—the pope against the heretics. Here he had undisputed conquest: here might the malevolence of his spirit legitimately expatriate, and his furious temper find victims for vengeance. No one did more to crush the Reformation in Italy than this man, who had in his early days sat in the Oratory of Divine Love with Sadolet, Pole, Contarini, and other men who loved the gospel in its purity. Widely had their paths diverged; never to meet, we fear, for all eternity.

CHAPTER XXXV.

GENIUS AND FAITH.

AN old man stands in a sculptor's studio, striking flakes of marble from a block before him with a most decisive chisel. Three figures of a group are already sketched, and he is at work on the fourth. A dead Christ, supported by the sorrowing mother, forms the chief of these. The former is partially elaborated, and a weight of deathliness has been infused from the artist's vivid conceptions into those marble limbs, which is to this day, in the duplicate group, the wonder of all beholders, where the statues remain behind the great altar of the cathedral of Florence. The other figures are much less finished. The sculptor is now outlining a standing Nicodemus. His chisel-strokes are so vehement—though the arm wielding that mallet is now eighty-three years old—that the spectator trembles for the roughness of each blow, lest the design be injured by the great fragments which fall away; but the impetuous sculptor sees through the shapeless marble his Idea, and

is merely knocking away the dead matter that imprisons it.

Francesco paused on the threshold of Michel Angelo's studio, and beheld the scene. So engrossed was the renowned workman that he did not hear the entrance ; with knitted brows and concentrated expression of face he continued to strike and to ruminate, until his servant Antonio drawing near announced a messenger from the Duchess of Ferrara.

Then the full piercing glance of those blue-gray, deep-set eyes suddenly fell on the visitor. A most kingly face and form, bearing some natural command in both, born of inextinguishable self-reliance and self-knowledge. Francesco approached the greatest artist of the age with the reverence due to his genius, and presented him with a letter from her Highness of Ferrara. While it was being read he had leisure to look about him in this sanctuary of art.

A model of the cupola of St. Peter's stood on a table ; plans of the building lay about : unfinished statues abounded. For such was the impetuous eagerness of the great sculptor that he frequently grew impatient with the slow development of this Ideal from the dull marble, and some later-born

thought would usurp possession of his brain, which he must forthwith strive to evolve into actual shape and solidity. Hence the number of unfinished works which remain to attest the unexampled fecundity of Michel Angelo's imagination.

“Eh, signor, you admire that?” said the garrulous and familiar Antonio, in an undertone, while he glanced toward his master and signalled the stranger with his thumb to draw nearer. “ ’Tis a rare design, but you should see the original, that he gave me! The Signor Tiberio Caliagni—you know him, a Florentine sculptor? He has it now, giving me two hundred gold crowns for my right. Of course, signor, the scudi were of more use to a poor man than the statue, yet for all I did not quite like to sell it. My master intended it for his own tomb first, but he grew tired of it, and the marble had a blemish which provoked him mightily every day. At last, striving to finish the whole affair in a hurry, he unfortunately struck a bit off the Madonna’s elbow; and I think he would have smashed up the whole group in his vexation, if I had not begged him to give it me just as it was. Then Signor Tiberio, who had been longing to possess some work of art from my master’s hand, persuaded me to let him have it for

the two hundred crowns ; and my master has promised him the use of his models for its repair. This is the same subject, but smaller in size : my master just amuses himself with sculpturing it, as you saw him now ; but he cannot work long at a time—age comes on him apace.” And the voice of the faithful servant dropped still lower as he looked toward the spare, snow-crowned figure of the master concerning whom he was so proud.

“ And this,” ventured Francesco, seeing the still abstracted gaze of Michel Angelo upon his letter.

“ This, signor, is a model of the restoration of the famous torso of the Belvidere—Hercules reposing from his labours, do you see ? My master amuses himself with such trifles, signor ; he has not the heart nor the muscle for large labours now, more especially since Urbino died. Urbino was my predecessor, signor ; my master loved him greatly, and grieved much for him after twenty-six years’ living together. He has an incomparable heart, has my master !”

Michel Angelo seemed suddenly to rouse himself from a reverie. He walked quickly across the room to another chamber beyond, and returned in a few minutes with a large cartoon in his hand, which presented the outlines of a very beautiful

face and a figure half length: the features of rich Roman type and exceeding purity of line; calm, full eyes, classic nostril, soft, crimson lips; and light golden hair in great folds of plaiting and waves around the head, beneath a heavy antique ornament like a half helmet.

“Ah!” exclaimed Michel Angelo, setting his drawing in a good light against the wall, “hast thou ever seen face like that, young man?”

Never, might Francesco safely affirm, as he gazed at that peerless beauty.

“Her Highness the duchess is good enough to ask me for a picture of the illustrious Marchesa di Pescara, she who is best known, perhaps, by her name of the ‘divine Vittoria Colonna.’ I have nothing but this sketch; yet if a man so old as I am may talk of time or opportunity, I shall endeavour to complete from it a portrait worthy of the subject and the person for whom it is destined. Thou art not going back to Ferrara immediately?”

No; the young physician had business in Naples.

“My good Antonio, thou mayest go.” So the servant, who had busied himself in grinding colours at a little distance from the conversation, left the studio. “Thou art no mere courier, signor —of that thine air and gait would inform me; but

this letter tells somewhat more. 'We are in Rome, so cannot speak plainly ; yet I will say so far as that thou seest a like believer in Michel Angelo Buonarroti ; and in what thou needst, command my help.'

Francesco clasped the aged hand, which had executed world's wonders of art, yet was dearer to him as the hand of one who trusted in the same Saviour than as a hand which princes had pressed in deference : he kissed it fervently—an Italian action of reverential respect from man to man. "Most noble signor, I thank thee."

"Yes," said the great artist, turning again toward the portrait of his illustrious friend ; "she it was who led me to the truth and taught me the path to heaven. I presented to her 'the blank page of a troubled mind,' and on it she wrote for me the highest knowledge—the knowledge that brings eternal life. She was my spiritual guide—she held up before me the one solution for all my doubts and fears, in the faith of the most blessed Christ. Ought I not to be grateful to her memory ? She has helped me to be new-born—to be remodelled for eternity."*

A minute's gazing at the magnificent features.

* See the Sonnets of Michel Angelo.

grandly calm: "Beautiful as her soul," observed Michel Angelo; "never was fairer spirit shrined in fairer form."

"One would scarce think to find a noble lady of her dignity, and among her temptations, heeding the truths of the gospel," said Francesco. "'Not many mighty, not many noble, are called.'"

"Fra Bernardino Ochino was the first who showed her the truth: when her heart was desolate after Pescara's death, and no comfort but the divine could reach her, his words seemed a balm from heaven; and he set her to search the holy Scriptures of God, to prove whether his sayings were true and that the faith of Christ alone could justify. Verily it was good news! As for me, my soul had for sixty-three years been tossed on seas of doubt before I received that glorious knowledge and sailed into the haven of everlasting peace. Wellnigh had I doubted that a religion so full of the foulest corruption as this in Rome, could be from God in anywise; wellnigh had I looked up with the fool, and said, 'There is no God,' or such iniquities could not be done under the sun! For I remember Borgia pope, young man; and human crime has never further gone!"

"Even the papacy has been purified to a certain

degree," said the visitor. "Paul the Fourth is a vast improvement on Alexander and Leo."

"Yes, yes," assented the artist; "but never can the Church agree to the great doctrine of justification by faith. Don't you see that it would cut away every temporal power at a blow? No more purgatory with a golden key; no more sacrifices for the dead; no more bequests of rich lands to buy salvation after a life of crime; no more papal absolutions nor indulgences; in fact, very little need of a priesthood. Ah, no, my friend! this new Council at Trent will condemn justifying faith as the blackest heresy. It cannot do otherwise."

Just then a man in the prime of life, and richly dressed in courtier's garb, entered the studio and saluted Michel Angelo with the familiarity of an assured friend.

"Ah, my Giorgio! is it thou? Hast done anything toward rectifying the mistake which that varlet of a mason committed in the King of France's chapel at St. Peter's? How he could make so grave an error in the measurements I know not. My model should have been sufficient guide. See here;" and he proceeded to explain and comment on the fault that had occurred as lucidly and energetically as if but fifty years, in-

stead of eighty, were weighing on his brain. "He believes, I dare warrant, that Michel Angelo is really in second childhood, as certain detractors have asserted, and thinks he may alter my plans with impunity. I shall show him that it is not so. See, young man!" turning to Francesco: "they say I am in my dotage—look here!"

He brought him to the half-finished model of the cupola which had attracted Francesco's attention previously. "Behold! much of it was executed by this hand. It should be sufficient to prove my continued faculties, think you?"

Francesco felt it almost affecting to be thus appealed to by this mighty intellect against detracting suspicions of decay. He bent to inspect the model closely, as well as to hide a moisture that gathered about his eyes.

"Noble Buonarroti, it seemeth to me perfect," he said, unfeignedly. "But I am no artist nor engineer."

"My Vasari," said Michel Angelo, addressing the new-comer, "hast thou that last sonnet I sent thee but a short time agone? He would have more skill to judge of words than of architecture, perchance."

And Vasari read for the young man the beautiful

lines which have descended to our day, wherein the great sculptor takes adieu of his art and of imagination, its “idol and monarch;” wherein he speaks of the two deaths approaching—“one certain, the other threatening? What can art or imagination do to avert such doom?”

“My one sole refuge is that love divine
Which from the cross stretched forth its arms to save.”*

“Methinks that Michel Angelo hath even excelled himself in this sonnet,” observed Vasari, complaisantly. “There is the ring of the true Petrarch metal therein.”

“And of a greater than Petrarch!” broke in Francesco. “A celestial hope and faith is uttered of which Petrarch never dreamed in his loftiest aspirations.”

“Young men, young men, ye are partial,” said the author. “Yet believe me, that not my works, which the world is pleased to call mighty efforts of genius, nor my fame, which is great, nor my friends, which are many and dear—are my cherished thought now or my source of satisfaction. Nay, rather do I turn to Him who died upon that cross; and straightway my soul, ‘like a frail bark ’scaped

* Sonnet lvi., written in his eighty-third year.

from fierce storms of wrath, glides into a placid sea of peace.* Before I knew the fulness of Christ's pardon, I scarce thought that even divine love could overlook my countless sins; but now the priceless value of his blood has taught me that 'measureless as his pains for us is his mercy for us, most blessed Christ!'"†

The reader of Michel Angelo's sonnets at the present day is amazed to find that this great man, who dwelt in the antechamber of popes and devised gorgeous accessories for Roman worship, and devoted his highest science to the erection of the noblest Roman cathedral, yet held doctrines as Protestant as Luther or Zwingli, and was at heart an humble, earnest believer in Jesus, and not in the sacred mummeries which daily surrounded him. Thus did the Lord God choose his own people from the most unlikely positions, and seal them his own till the day of his appearing.

Vasari, who is chiefly renowned in the nineteenth century as the Boswell to this greater than Johnson, presently brought forward a plan of some apartments in the ducal palace at Florence, on which he was then engaged as architect and fresco-

* Sonnet xlix.

† Sonnet I.

painter. Francesco shortly took his leave. He had thus executed the Duchess Renée's last commission in Rome, and was at liberty to proceed on his journey southward.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CLEFT IN A ROCK.

LONG lines of tapers blinking feebly to the noonday sun, and dropping wax about as they leaned hither and thither in uncertain hands ; crucifixes seeming top-heavy and borne at various angles ; a path beautifully flower-strewn, embroidered with patterns of coloured blossoms, crushed at every step of the crowd ; an image lifted above all—the perpetual Madonna, smiling feebly with scarlet lips and pink cheeks and staring eyes ; copes and cowls in abundance on the central line of the procession : all winding through a long street of lava-built houses in the little town of Ariccia. Had the pagans of Horace's time, who worshipped Diana on the same spot, glanced across the centuries and seen this procession to honour the Virgin Mary, they could scarce believe but it was their own goddess-adoration still walking the earth, a little modernized, but essentially the same.

“ My little heart,” quoth Paschali to a child by the wayside, as the procession drew nigh along the

flower-strewn road, “what great day is this that the images are shown forth?”

The child looked up at the tall, bearded figure without reply: her skirt was full of the roseate-purplish cyclamen, which she strewed into certain chalked marks on the path. Others were similarly engaged with baskets of blossoms; and so the many-coloured mosaic of flowers grew before the feet of the procession, and behind them was a crushed, shapeless mass.

“Knowest thou not the day of the Invention of the Holy Cross?” said an old monk, who stood aside, and seemed to superintend the carpeting of the road. “Methinks, friend, thou hast paid but small attention to the festivals of our Holy Church, or thou needest not have asked. Come here, mia figlia, and lay a bordering of that golden broom-blossom along the edge of this cyclamen. These two little damsels, my son,” he added, addressing Paschali again, “are most highly honoured of our Lady; for they have so well behaved themselves, by her favour, as to be chosen to represent the blessed Santa Anna and the Madonna on the last *festa* in Ariccia.”

Then Paschali noticed that instead of a garland round her hair, the little girl with the cyclamen

wore a gilded coronet, and that the small head was held erect, with somewhat of an elated air. Could the child forget that lately she had been seated on a throne before the high altar, as representative of the queen of heaven, and that a whole congregation had bowed before her and done her reverence? It was a lesson of self-importance and of idolatry not easily obliterated.

“Come away down this by-street,” said Negrino, who did not desire to attract suspicion by an ostentatious refusal of obeisance as the procession passed. “Perchance there is some outlet for getting on the Naples road more quickly than if we waited till this path be clear.”

So just as the foremost taper-carriers approached, our three travellers dived down a narrow passage between the lava-built houses, skirting the main streets at the back. Emerging lower down on the hill which the town crests, before them stretched along the horizon the wide blue expanse of the Mediterranean; and the land was all diversified with hill and vale and wood and cultivated fields between.

“Again thou didst tremble for my headstrong zeal, amico mio,” said Paschali to his brother pastor, Negrino. “Yet I am well assured that at

a pinch thou wouldest be as steadfast in not bowing the knee to the idol as I would be."

The other smiled, "I hope so," he said. "But my body belongs to my Master as well as my soul: and I am desirous to work for him so long as I can, knowing that he does not wish me rashly to destroy any of his good gifts. It seemeth to me that we can glorify the most blessed Christ and do injury to the kingdom of Satan at this present time more by our life than by our death, my Paschali."

"Hear him, arguing with me as with a being devoid of the first principle of self-preservation," quoth the Piedmontese, turning toward Francesco. "Ah, my friend, thou knowest I have too many reasons to wish for both long life and quiet life," he added, with a touch of mournfulness in his voice, as his thoughts went back to the lonely maiden in Geneva—a reflex of some of her continual thoughts of him.

"But, as I was saying before we met the procession," quoth Negrino, taking up the thread of former discourse, "the characteristic of this present Reformation is its union of science and piety. The enlightened and educated of the earth are its great promoters, and it has repaid their attachment

by a Christianizing influence on the learning of the age. I doubt not but Italy would drift back into paganism, except for the renovation of religion consequent on the study of the Sacred Scriptures."

"It is strange how the modern tongues have been brought into use by the same movement," remarked Francesco. "The appeal of the Reformers to the people necessitated the speaking in the popular languages, and not in Latin or Greek, which is understood only by learned men. Luther wrote in German—Ochino can only utter or write Italian. It is a sign of the times."

"Yes, a symptom that the renovation of religion proceeds now from no limited sect or narrow clique, but from the powerful people."

"More so in Germany than in Italy, I should say," observed Francesco. "I see no fewer processions than ever, nor are the churches less crowded. I fear that with us the Reformation is rather among the upper ranks."

"It was fashionable to be a free-thinker before it became a dangerous amusement," said Negrino. "Princesses and cardinals do not easily lay down their honours and go to prison; they have not the sturdy grasp of our common men and women upon

truth and faith. Yet methinks Contarini could have made a martyr."

"All believers need that stamp upon them now, when a Caraffa wears the tiara," observed Paschali, his face set sternly. "As for me, I expect none other fate—nay, what do I say? I look for none other crown of rejoicing."

Some days of slow pedestrian march elapsed before they reached Naples. "Vedi Napoli, e poi muori!"—"See Naples and die!"—is the vain-glorious proverb of its citizens; and truly God has showered a rich dower of beauty on the southern capital of Italy. But in no splendid villa or palazzo set in gorgeous scenery did our trio of travellers find repose. Negrino, who was a Vaudois "barbe," or itinerant pastor, and had been this road before on a Calabrian mission, knew that the brethren who would receive them in Naples were poor and obscure, hiding literally in the rocks. He guided his companions to a certain outlet of the town, where were precipitous mural cliffs, perhaps the relic of an ancient sea-beach: little shops were ranged along beneath; at one, that of a fruit-seller, he paused.

The old woman was intent on arranging a fresh

batch of blood-oranges among their green leaves temptingly. Negrino put his hand on the brown, wrinkled fingers with a friendly pressure. She looked up quickly, shading her eyes from the sun-glare :

“ What, signor ! Thou art welcome to poor old Clarice’s house. Nay, come in, come in, my pretty gentlemen ; I have a chamber for ye all, an ye be the right sort, as I guess by your company. Gian, stay by the fruit-baskets till I return ;” which aside was addressed to a chubby grandchild, who looked far more ready to eat the figs and oranges than to take care of them.

“ Here, gentlemen, here is the chamber where Monsignor Valdez hath often held his meetings, when poor old Clarice was a younger woman by twenty years ; thou knowest it of old, Messer Negrino, and for that it hath been put to holy uses no common traveller lodges therein. Enter, gentlemen, enter, in the name of the blessed ’Vangelo, which we all love ; rest yourselves a little, and I will have somewhat for your repast presently.”

The room was excavated from the precipitous rock, and was reached by a flight of steps similarly cut out ; two or three other such apartments, but

darker and smaller, composed the fruit-seller's whole house.

"Clarice is an old disciple," observed Negrino. "She hath kept on the even course of her profession for thirty years, as I have heard, since the gospel was first preached in Naples; and her fearlessness seems to prosper. She hath never had the persecution, one might think, yet I doubt if she hath sheltered herself beneath any compliances."

"Ah, my friend, the bold policy is not always the worst, thou seest," said Paschali. "He giveth his angels charge: no servant of God can perish till his Master's work be ended."

"Clarice," asked Negrino, while the old woman bustled about preparing their meal, "we were wondering how it came to pass that you have been preserved to this day in peace and safety, with the Inquisition abroad?"

"Ah, signor, that's just as it should be—through the good hand of the great Lord taking care of me. Perhaps they don't think a poor old woman of my sort worth burning or shutting up in prison; perhaps they never remember me at all. In either way, it's just the doing of the good Lord; and I am not afraid, signor—not afraid but he will take care of his poor servant to the end. I was in the

hands of the *sbirri* once, signor, but the good Lord saved me; and I was sent back the same day to my little shop, and didn't lose as much as an orange by the business. Hey, Gian, what's that?"

For the little guardian of the baskets called his grandmother on appearance of a customer. Having received many kisses and blessings for his faithfulness, he was continued in office after the sale was effected; and Dame Clarice returned to her guests.

"Ay, this is a blessed chamber," began the garrulous Neapolitan afresh; "many a time have I seen the holy Signor Valdez sit where you sit now, signor, and hold discourse over the blessed gospel book with the most reverend Fra Pietro Martire, the Frate Mollo, and others; nay, we had the Fra Bernardin here more than once. Ohimé! alas! those are old times now, and the word is nigh extinct in Naples. 'Tis hard for a poor body to get along; but there's the same most blessed Christ in heaven, and he never changes, never grows old."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JUAN VALDEZ AND HIS SCHOOL.

 LD Clarice the fruit-seller was bent on showing her best hospitality to the strangers, for the sake of the common faith. Stefano Negrino was a former acquaintance, having, as already stated, travelled this way before on a mission to the Calabrian Christians ; for as a Vaudois “barbe,” or pastor, his duty called him to go whither the synod sent him, and thus the colonies were ministered unto in spiritual things by itinerant teachers, commissioned from the valleys.

He sat at the small window, whose wooden shutter was drawn back for light’s sake, and looked out on the little open-air shops in the street and on the changeful tide of people flowing past. Naples was just rousing from its silent hours of siesta ; the lazzaroni were stretching their great, drowsy lengths in shades of porches and arcades, waking from the delicious oblivion of sleep to the want of macaroni : even the wide, cool churches had been tenanted by many a slumberer, while the

fierce sun burned external nature with almost tropical glow, compelling languor and repose to all things animate.

Negrino turned from the window with an audible moan, after a few minutes' gaze. The thought which so often visits earnest-minded believers in Jesus Christ and partakers of his great salvation, when they behold heedless multitudes treading the common ways of life, crowding the thoroughfares of business or pleasure—How is it with the souls of all these? how fare these on the journey for eternity?—had entered the pastor's heart, and smote his spiritual sensibilities to the quick. Ay, he felt that he could offer his body to be burned on the grand piazza of the heedless city, if only such a sacrifice might stir the souls of its thousands, and set them in the road to eternal life.

“Once it bid fair for reformation,” he murmured; “but the movement is stifled ere this, and Naples’ day of grace is past. Good sister,” he added aloud to old Clarice, “have our friends any meeting-place now, as in times gone by?”

“Alas!” was the reply, “save a gathering here, or in some poor brother’s upper room, we dare not assemble regularly to worship the Lord. A great many of them have gone back, signor, affrighted,

doubtless, at the cruel rage of the adversary. Ah, gentlemen, how different was it in the days of my mistress, the most illustrious signora, Giula Gonzaga, when I have seen the noblest dames and doctors of Naples all assembled to study the sacred word!"

"Wert thou then," asked Paschali, with interest, "appertaining to the household of that celebrated lady?"

"Ay was I, signor; and there I learned the truth, which has become a part of my own soul. For meetings were held in my lady's private chambers, to which sometimes her servitors were admitted, when any learned man was to edify by preaching the word. Whom have I not seen there among the noble and the good of Naples? And how beautiful was she herself, my most illustrious mistress! Those two ladies, sisters-in-law likewise, were like angels come down from heaven, more lovely than any man had ever beheld—the Marchesa di Pescara and my mistress. Often have I seen them sitting humbly side by side, with a volume of the gospel-book, the 'Vangelo, between them, while some learned doctor expounded it in their hearing. She had the most golden hair that ever was seen, had the Marchesa Vittoria; but

verily you could not tell which of the twain was loveliest, my mistress or she. And they were as good as they were beautiful, and loved each other exceeding much, though they loved our Saviour Christ more than all things. Ah! most blessed days were those! but poor old Clarice is left almost a sole relic in Naples, for they are all dead or gone. I'm like a withered cluster of last year's grapes on a blasted vine, signor! Well, pazienza! the good Lord won't forget poor old Clarice when his time comes."

Attending them during supper, and by no means to be persuaded to partake of the meal, she had more to say of her remembrances on the same subject. Twenty-two years before, the Reformed doctrines had found in Naples some of their warmest supporters throughout Italy. A band of earnest believers quickly gathered round Juan Valdez, a highly-born and intellectual Spaniard, who, entrusted with a German embassy by Charles the Fifth, had in Germany found the turning-point of his life when he read the writings of Luther, and felt the truths therein contained brought home to his heart by the Divine Spirit. Coming to Naples as secretary to the viceroy, and conscious in himself that he was a saved man through the belief

of Christ, he could not rest satisfied without imparting this life-giving faith to others; and the distinctive doctrines of justification by faith and sanctification by the Spirit were received among the noble and the highly educated before the dark suspicion of heresy had visited Valdez. He had extraordinary influence, from his position and his talents, with those of the highest rank, and this power he used for his soul's Master without ceasing; and the more efficaciously in that he wore no ecclesiastical frock, nor ever arrogated to himself the office of preacher. But he was a close, careful Bible-student, and his whole conduct was permeated with the piety thence drawn; his eloquence of conversation and elegance of manner were pressed also into the service of his Lord; men saw that he lived the truths which he professed; and the beauty of his example drew forth many inquirers to ask after "the more excellent way" in which Juan Valdez was walking.

Old Clarice remembered that spare, slender figure well, which seemed always in infirm health, yet always beaming with intellect and heart-happiness. It was the centre of every gathering of the Reformed in Naples for many a year. She had seen it surrounded by such learners as Peter

Martyr, Carnesecchi, Marc Antonio Flaminio (the greatest Latinist of his age), Giulia Gonzaga and Vittoria Colonna. The honest fruit-seller comprehended not the full significance of such names, but she knew that they were of the world's great ones; and many besides poor Clarice were attracted by the brilliancy of the clique, who in time of temptation and persecution fell away, because they had no deepness of earth.

“But, gentlemen, I was forgetting ;” and away bustled the old woman to the crevice in her cavern home which acted as her cellar, the cool storage-place for fruits and flowers over-night. “Gentlemen, here's some of the best wine of Naples, from the black volcanic grape which is so much esteemed. Ecco ! 'tis almost thick ; they call it *mangiaguerra* : you've no such wine in the North, signor.”

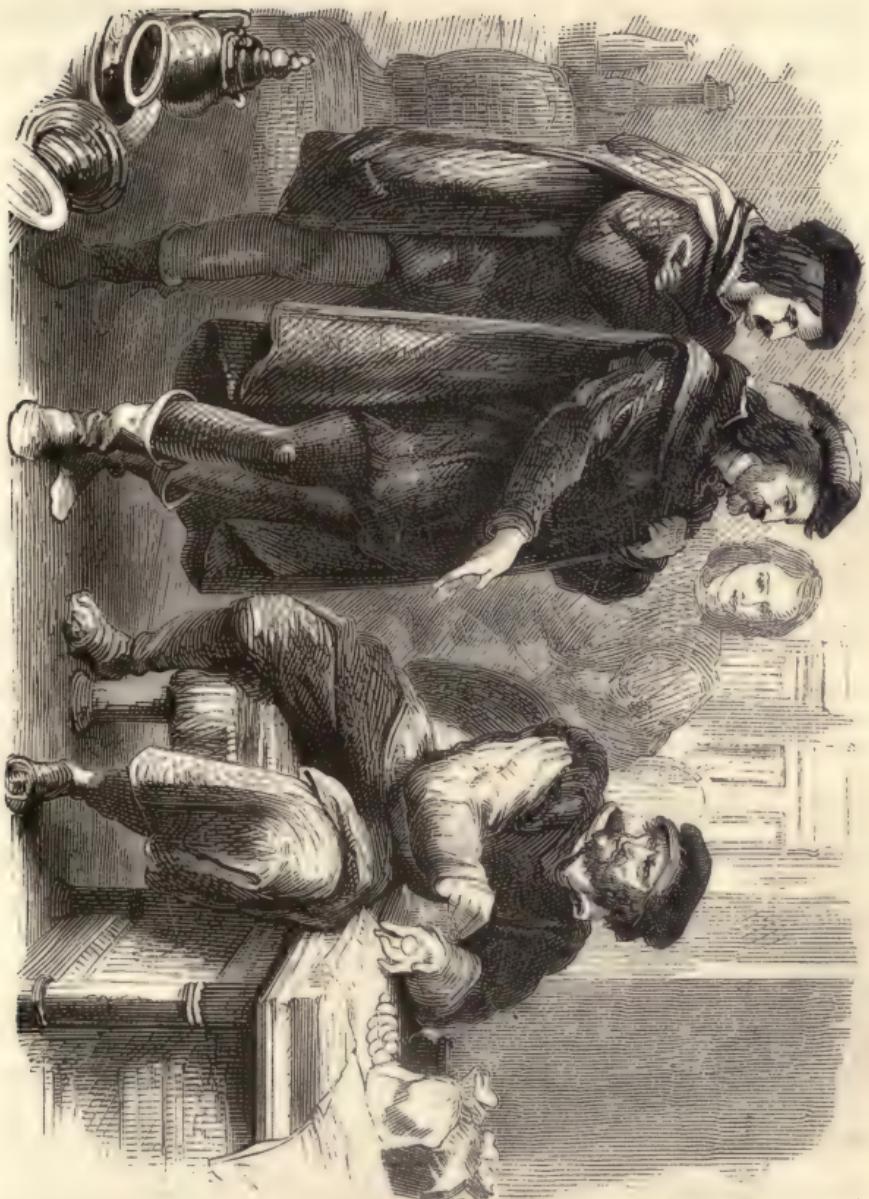
But she thought that they did not at all do justice to her precious beverage in the small quantity each used.

“These are no times for fleshly delights, such as eating and drinking beyond what we need for mere sustainment of our bodily strength,” observed the ascetic Paschali, in answer to her remonstrance. “Good sister, be not like Martha in the 'Vangelo, who was cumbered about much serving.”

"And if the honest woman had a house and guests as I have, it was all very natural and proper that she should be desirous to serve them," cried old Clarice, her housewifely instincts rising. "And thou, young signor, hast had never a roof of thine own, or believe me, thou wouldest understand her better."

Paschali made no reply; but a glance of Negrino's assured the latter that his companion was carried back in thought to the fair betrothed in Geneva, the maiden with whom he had hoped one day to share a home. The young man arose and walked quickly to the unshuttered opening which served for a window. How would the old hostess' heart have yearned over him, with the true instincts of woman—whose compassion is deep for such things—had she guessed how matters stood with that fine, soldierly fellow! As it was, she felt somewhat affronted and put up her wine with an offended air.

The two pastors had some business with a certain Neapolitan, who carried on the trade of a goldsmith in one of the most populous streets. To him they had letters equivalent to money, which it behooved them to cash before proceeding further on their journey. The man had been a Valdezian



once, but had taken the safe line of outward conformity to the Romish Church of late years.

“Better to bend and avoid the storm, than let it sweep me away altogether,” he remarked, as he gathered from a drawer the golden ducats which were value for the dingy, uncommercial-looking bit of paper that Negrino had given him. “ ‘Tis pity,” said he, lingeringly toying with the coins, and glancing again half dubiously at the bit of paper—“ ‘tis pity to trust such good gold with you, messer, on a dangerous errand. Could you not leave even a portion in my safe-keeping? I’ll give thee warrant for it.”

“Why, man,” quoth Negrino, “it is naught but affection for the very metal thou hast, or thou wouldst consider that the exchange letter amply pays thee for thy trouble. Ah! my friend, now I comprehend how thy former faith has waned so as to scandalize thy brethren.”

The citizen minutely scanned the order again with a darkened face. Reproof was no sweeter to him than to any other man. He commenced paying out the money slowly. “But, friend, art thou not returning after a time? would it not be well to leave some of this gold in safe hands?”

No great sum was it after all: Negrino took

every ducat into his broad leathern purse. "We would not be burdensome on the churches," he observed, "although he who serves the altar, should live of the altar. And Calabria is no such unsafe place, unless the *sbirri* of the Inquisition penetrate therein," he added.

The citizen visibly shuddered as he locked his till, more from apprehension for his dear-loved money than for himself. Yet some old feeling of clanship moved him toward the pastors. "Come," he said, "and rest a while, if ye have no further business—come in and sup with my family: I am glad to see friends of such nature, and truly we are not much troubled with them in these days."

The goldsmith's house was a fine one, and overlooked the wide blue bay of Naples, concerning whose beauties painters and poets have gone wild for expression these two centuries past. Opposite rose its distinctive feature, the dread volcano, which by day wafts a faint smoke into the blue heavens, gentle as the breathing of a censer's incense; and by night shows its brow frowned over by a black cloud, and furrowed oftentimes with fire. The broad road between the houses and the water's edge was peopled with an ever-passing throng and the highway of the sea was gay with vessels,

from the latteen-sailed felucca to the armed galley of Spain. Truly a fair scene, as well under the iron government of Alva as under the tyranny of the last Italian Bourbon.

Our three travellers needed not to sup again, but Negrino had desired converse with the goldsmith, and embraced the opportunity afforded by the social board. The latter was a gray-haired man, probably coeval with the century ; his shifting eyes and hard-set mouth were a good index to his character. Yet deep in his soul lay the conviction of the truth of the doctrines which once he had openly professed while Religion walked in her silver slippers ; and the double-dealing of his life brought its own punishment of inquietude and unhappiness in its train.

“ Does not the Marchese di Vico dwell somewhere near ? ” asked Negrino. “ Methinks his palazzo is on the bay, as well as I remember.”

“ Ah, yes,” replied the citizen, “ but farther on some distance ; a very noble residence ; but he takes no pleasure in aught since he is so angered with his son.”

A light broke on Negrino’s countenance : “ Galleazzo Caraccioli hath indeed chosen the better part, and counted the reproach of Christ greater riches

than the treasures of Egypt," he observed, smiling "He hath seen the recompense of the reward by faith, and deems the same worth some little endurance."

"Well, well, there's reason in all things," rejoined the time-serving citizen. "And when a man is born to a great inheritance, I see not why he should willingly put himself on equality with those who are born to nothing but hard work."

"There's one answer to it all, my friend—'for Christ's sake!' The noble young marquis knows that he cannot bear too much for him who died to save his soul. Thou didst know Caraccioli at Geneva, my brother?"

This he said to Paschali, who answered in the affirmative: "He is among the refugees in most consideration, so that to him Calvin hath dedicated a Commentary; yet he has laid aside his title, and lives as simply as any barbe of the valleys, without the least pretension."

"And now, with his relative Caraffa on the papal throne, he might hope for any reward were he to give up the faith," remarked Negrino.

"That was one of the bribes held out to tempt him when some time since his father had an interview with him at Mantua. But finding him in-

flexible to prayers and considerations of interest, the old man ended by cursing him heartily and loading him with the bitterest reproaches."

"Ay, he has proved himself a good soldier," was Negrino's observation.

"But his hardest trial of all," said Paschali, "was when his wife, whom he tenderly loved, wrote to him, naming a place of meeting where she could propound to him certain scruples of conscience. And when, at the risk of his life, he reached the castle of Vico, where his whole family were assembled, he found that 'the said scruples were artful insinuations of her confessor, that she ought to divorce herself from a heretic. Even this did not move the young man's steadfastness, nor the tears and caresses of his little children, nor the entreaties of his aged father, renewed with importunity. No, he could not falsify his faith for the dearest relationships on earth combined! He came back, looking haggard and worn from the effects of this fiery trial;—and what is mine to his?" added Paschali, mentally.

"Another star in Valdez' crown of rejoicing," said Negrino, his eyes on the distant altar-fire of the volcano. "'Whoso leaveth wife and children, and houses and lands, for my sake and the gos-

pel's,' saith Christ, 'shall receive an hundred-fold.'"

"It is well for those to whom grace is given," quoth the worthy citizen, who had fidgetted a little during the story of Caraccioli. And when, later in the evening, his guests rose to depart, he drew Negrino aside, and besought him once more to reflect whether the sum he was carrying in solid gold were not better left in surety till matters were somewhat more settled; "For they say," added the goldsmith, "that whensoever Alva succeeds in erecting his Spanish Inquisition here, the first onslaught will be on that very Calabrian territory whereunto you are bound; and then, signor—" shrugging his shoulders expressively, as if to signify a universal deluge, in which gold-pieces must needs be irrecoverably swallowed up.

"Amico mio, I had trouble to keep thy patrimony from his hands," said Negrino to Francesco Altieri, as they proceeded to old Clarice's cavern-quarters for the night. For the major part of the gold belonged to Francesco, and was intended for investment in some fields and house where he might prepare a home for his wife. He had not been reassured by the goldsmith's last statement; but it only proved a fresh anxiety to cast upon his

strong Saviour. What he would have done, many a time, but for that mighty refuge and help, what worldly men did always without it amid the turmoils and uncertainties of this troublesome life, he could not tell.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CALABRIAN COLONIES.

THE monastery bells from the heights were tolling the Ave Maria; soothingly floated down the chimes through the still evening air, and all men paused in their work or their pleasure, whatever it might be, to utter the unmeaning prayer which was, in their habit, indissolubly connected with those evening bells. The goatherd stood still in his lounging march homeward, the peasant with the buffalo cart made the sign of the cross and muttered, the housewife laid down her spindle for a minute; and Italy was wrapped in brief, idolatrous devotion from the Alps to the Straits of Messina.

Scarcely a whit more idolatrous had it been the glory of the sinking sun which they adored, as away the orb subsided from sight, settling down like a red wreck, into the great Mediterranean Sea. Through the mouth of the valley that pageant could be seen, where the spurs of the Southern Apennines stood apart to admit cool, salt breezes

into the heart of a hot land. But all in that glen did not worship when the monastery chimes came floating down so musically from the heights. Certain cottages there were where dwelt men of doubtful opinions, but of undoubted character; men seldom seen at mass or confession, but always seen when a sick neighbour needed help, or some righteous work for public weal required to be done; men whom monk and priest hated, except for the fat tithes, the best in the district, paid regularly from their farms; yet who were loved by the peasantry about them for their kindness and goodwill. This contrariety between heretical faith and most Christian practice had sorely confounded others than the illiterate farmers of Calabria. "If you ask what is its manner of life," wrote Saint Bernard, "nothing is more irreproachable. The Vaudois heretic strikes no one, defends no one, does not exalt himself above any one. Fastings render him pale; he does not eat the bread of idleness, but labours with his own hands for a livelihood." And an archbishop of Turin had testified, "They are without blame among men, applying themselves with all their power to the observance of the commandments of God."

Our travellers, with the bright sunset before

alluded to, had reached the outskirts of the Vaudois settlements. But they were anxious to attain San Sesto before resting, if possible; and pushed on through the waning, many-coloured light, and through the beautiful landscape of wood and hill and fertile valley, where the air was laden with luxurious perfume from the orange-blossom and from hedges of sweet myrtle; and for treble to the grand bass diapason of the not distant surge was the shrill musical monotone of the cicala in the long grass, and the notes of some of the latest-waking birds in the copse. How lovely was every scene! how peaceful! Francesco's heart beat with throbs of joy to think of Bianca's happiness here, if their heavenly Father so willed it.

The twilight was not long: before Francesco had ceased from the thought of Bianca, night had descended upon the glowing world, and troops of stars rushed forth into the purple vault above. Simultaneously, troops of other stars seemed to kindle on the earth; myriads of brilliant atoms flitted about, an evanescent illumination of all dark places. Never had our Northerns seen fireflies so numerous and dazzling; they could scarcely weary of admiration, for in this land night seemed jocund as day.

A mass of dark, mysterious woods girded the road almost to the dwellings of San Sesto. Prim-
eval forest and marsh, according to Negrino; “a retreat for our four thousand,” quoth he, “should ever—which God forbid!—persecution set its iron front in our territory.” The Neapolitan’s words had perhaps helped him to a foreboding.

“And the colony amounts to four thousand?” said Francesco. “A strong body, especially of such men as our Vaudois. Methinks even Philip’s government would hesitate ere it lent sanction to the oppression of so many good subjects and citizens.”

“Ah, but see you not,” returned Negrino, “that the Church has no such scruples; its officers are the most pitiless men alive—men in whom every feeling of compassion and brotherliness has been stifled by their unnatural life, devoid of hallowing domestic ties. But evil is sufficient for its own day,” he added, more cheerfully. “Not a hair of our head can perish without our Father. Come, my brothers, let us sing the ‘Hymn of the Cross.’”

And the three voices, on the skirts of the dark forest, raised the sweet words of Savonarola:

“Jesu, sommo conforto,
Tu sei tutto il mio amore,

E'l mio beato porto,
E santo Redentore!
O gran bontá! dolce pietá!
Felice quel che teco unito sta!"

"Yes, happy the soul united unto thee!" reiterated Negrino, pausing in the chant. "My brothers, in the strength of this shall we not face any woe, knowing that life or death cannot separate us from the love of Christ?"

The hymn, heard distantly by the dwellers in San Sesto, was recognized ere the singers had ended it and reached the first houses of the little town. Negrino threaded his way with the assured step of one familiar to the place, unheeding the curiosity of people that turned out of their cottages to look at the strangers as the bright moonlight revealed them, until he came to a small habitation close by a large one. And here, opening the door without preliminary, he was in the presence of a family at supper. The father rose up inquiringly, but after a steady glance, he embraced the foremost of the three: "My brother! thou hast returned! Thou art a thousand times welcome."

"And I have brought thee a new pastor," said Negrino, introducing Paschali — "a pastor that shall abide to feed the flock, and that is fearless as

any mountain eagle in his defence of truth," he added.

The younger man smiled, perhaps a little sadly, at the commendation. The Vaudois schoolmaster looked narrowly at his countenance as he grasped his hand ; then, as if satisfied with the inspection, he wrung it again, cordially : " Welcome, in thy Master's name."

Wife and children were meanwhile busy adding to the repast for the strangers ; an uncut goat's-milk cheese was produced, more maize-cakes put on the table, some Calabrian wine drawn from their small stores ; chestnuts and olives brought them to their limit of variety ; and the good woman secretly wished she had only known of the guests beforehand—she might have procured grapes, or even baked fresh maize-cakes, instead of these stale, crusty things.

She was soon easy on the subject, for two of the new arrivals seemed not to know what they were eating, and engrossed her husband so much that he was nigh as abstinent as themselves. Francesco, who was not quite so sublimated, won her heart by his attention to the cheese and cakes, accompanied with certain laudatory words.

Supper was scarce over when neighbours began

to drop in. And soon the news spread like wild-fire through the adjoining streets that the new pastor had come, for whom Marco d'Asceglo had been sent, the Genevese-ordained preacher, who was to dwell among them, and set all right which had hitherto been wrong in their discipline or doctrine. Paschali was nothing loth to begin his ministerial work that very hour. To as many as the small house would hold, and as many as could hear his words through the open door, he preached a full and clear gospel. He spared not that which he considered their sinful compliances for safety's sake:

“ You have forgotten that you should confess Christ's name ; and remember you not, O deluded people, that whoso confesseth not Christ upon earth shall be denied by him before his Father and the holy angels ? Certainly ye are not alone in this backsliding. There be some in our valleys of the Alps who carry with them certificates that they be genuine Papists, and have their children baptized by priests with all the mummeries of superstition ; ay, and go to the so-called sacrifice of the mass, openly bowing the knee to Baal, that they may be seen of men ; and they excuse themselves—verily a fancied excuse !—by saying secretly

when they enter the mass-house, 'Cave of robbers, may God confound thee!' I have heard that similar practices extend even here. My brethren, such duplicity is intolerable to the righteous Lord. Think you that he will not protect the men who range themselves under his banner against Anti-christ in the face of all the world? I tell you, that if all the devils on earth and in hell were leagued to destroy you, mightier is He that is for you than all that can be against you! Your Father can sheath the sword and quench the fagot of the persecutor if it be his will; and if it be not his will, O servant of Christ, will there not be a quicker entrance into the joy of your Lord and a more dazzling crown of glory?"

Sobs and moans came from that excitable Southern audience; glowing eyes, betokening glowing hearts, met the youthful preacher's every look.

"I am no smooth man," he said, "and shall speak no smooth words to you, people of my charge. I shall publish the gospel of Christ among you, in this and your other towns, as freely and fearlessly as they do at Geneva. Circumstances of peril do not alter a pastor's duty. If it were my duty in Switzerland to speak boldly the whole doctrine of my Master, it is no less my duty

in Italy, having no fear before mine eyes but that of God."

Thus did Paschali enunciate the principles which were to guide his ministry. Strange, passionate feelings of remorse for past dereliction, resolves for future duty, admiration of the fearless young man who thus offered himself a mark for all venom-points of hate and persecution, mingled stormily in the breast of many a one in San Sesto that night. A throb of electric courage had passed from his intrepid soul to theirs; a new career of confessorship was indeed opening before them.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

STORM GATHERING FROM THE NORTH.

WASCHALI fulfilled the promise of his earliest sermon in San Sesto. Nothing could be more uncompromising than his preaching. Through all public places in Calabria, wherever descendants of the Vaudois were to be found, there did the young Genevese pastor stand up and declare the gospel of Christ with boldness, fearing no earthly menace. Such zeal is infectious. His exhortations against the sinful compliances to which fear had forced his flock were so effectual that numbers ceased to attend the services of the Roman Church, notwithstanding the suspicion that fell on them forthwith. Far and wide it was reported among the Roman Catholics of Calabria and Apulia that a fiery Lutheran had come from the North, utterly to destroy the Church in these provinces. But there seemed no feasible plan for silencing the daring evangelist as yet. The Vaudois residents were protected by the most sacredly stringent conventions, observed by generations of landholders and

rulers ; and which guaranteed them certain rights of worship and the possession of their own teachers.

“But, my friend,” would the gentle Negrino say, “thou needest not to be so vehement, nor to attack the religion of the majority so openly.”

“Truth requires openness and vehemence,” would be Paschali’s reply. “Too long has God’s word been spoken with bated breath and fearfulness. Forgettest thou the confession of Angrogna ? If ’twere by nothing but that, I am bound to set my face against all evasions of duty and every act of dissimulation by which the weak-minded seek to ward off danger. Thou dost remember how that synod adjured all men to practice no more concealment, but be open in their profession of faith for the glory of God ? And as for my own life, brother, which thou apprehendest may fall a sacrifice, I fear not,” added Paschali, with a sublime smile. “I have given it to God ; let him use it as seemeth good in his sight.”

And the young pastor persisted in denouncing every superstition which came under his view ; would ridicule the ceremonies of dedicating altars or holy places, calling them “feasts of stones ;” would openly proclaim that none but God can ex-

communicate—that every man in a state of grace has as much power of absolution as the pope himself, for that the only absolution possible by man is the declaring to the contrite heart the benefit of the death of Jesus Christ our Lord. Other such doctrines, levelling at the root of priestly power, would he proclaim on every occasion, continually fearless of consequences.

Thus a year passed by. Mutterings of storm were heard in the distance, but the heaven over the Vaudois was as yet serene, while the other Reformed communities of Italy experienced the full buffettings of persecution. Often did Francesco and his wife (for Bianca had now joined him) congratulate each other on the quiet retreat they had found in these Calabrian vales, where they could worship their God in simplicity and peace. Paschali was a frequent guest in their vine-covered cottage not far from the town of La Guardia, which Francesco had chosen for neighbourhood because it was the single fortified place possessed by the colonists, and had been erected purposely for defence and refuge on the sea-coast. The first Vaudois had been aided to build it by their feudatory the Marquis of Spinello, who named it from its guardian wall.

One bright evening in July, 1559, Bianca was sitting in the little garden which fronted their cottage, waiting for the return of her husband from the fields. At her feet on the grass nestled a little child of some months old. She looked away toward the concentrated brilliance of the sunset over the sea. A few bands of rose-coloured vapour lay about the declining orb; and away farther north was piled a stone-gray mass of cloud, now gilded most beautifully on its protuberances, and almost imperceptibly dilating, climbing, sailing southward.

“Ha! eccolo! my little bird! my angel! here comes father. Dost see thy father, little one? Look down the slope, mio fanciulletto! Ah, thou seest him—thou shalt run to meet him, little bird! And the good pastor is with him; nay, frown not at the stranger, mio bambinello, my precious one!”

And carrying on such running remarks concerning the phases of feeling which she, by an innocent fiction not yet wholly extinct, chose to attribute to her babe, the young mother hastened toward the pair who were slowly ascending the hill. Before reaching them she saw that some grave business was in hand. Francesco’s eyes met hers without the usual smile—he even put by her arm in an abstracted way, and scarce noticed his child. She

stepped behind into the narrow path with an undefined sinking at her heart, conscious that the matter must indeed be important which absorbed her husband's faculties so completely ; and the old bugbear of Bianca's life rose before her again—the very real fiend, Persecution.

It was no sentimental terror, this which had overshadowed her since her early days at Locarno. She had lived in a continual dread and doubt until her removal to Calabria, where the extensive tract of country peopled by Protestants, their organization and guaranteed immunities gave her a sense of security unknown before. And now, was the old dread to be revived ? Walking after the men in the path, she would overhear such low words as the “marquis our suzerain”—“never adverse formerly”—“summons to appear at Foscalda,” and others like these ; whence her woman's wit easily welded the truth.

Suddenly her husband turned round as if some idea had struck him, and he took the burden of the child from her arms. “ ‘Tis too much for thee, uphill, my Bianca ;” and the grave face resumed its talking with Paschali.

The Marchese di Spinello summon the Vaudois before him ! Why, he had always hitherto been

friendly ; verily it was his interest to be so, seeing that he had no more improving tenants on all his lands than these “oltra-montani,” as the Romish peasantry styled them. No higher or surer rents were payable throughout the province than they paid. Some dense pressure must have been put on him from without to induce this seemingly hostile step of a formal citation. And the poor young wife trembled in her very soul as she heard again the dreaded names which had been familiar enough in Ferrara—the Holy Office, the Inquisition, the Congregation of the Faith. Mysterious and awful powers ! Bianca pressed her hand on her throbbing little heart, which already imagined the worst, and unspoken words ascended in prayer to God.

The child reached forth its chubby hands, with inarticulate murmurings of wishfulness, toward a bright knot of crimson gladiolas growing on a crag beside the pathway. The father stopped and gathered for him the blossoms, smiling at his eagerness, and smiling also back at the mother, by which action he became aware of the fear dwelling in her face. Immediately he left Paschali and drew her arm within his own :

“What aileth thee, dear one ? Is it this news

of the summons before the marquis that affrighteth thee? Let not thy faith be small, my wife. He who has delivered us from six troubles is not powerless to save us from the seventh."

"But tell me, Francesco—tell me what it is; what causeth this sudden change of our lord's demeanour? He was wont to be conciliating toward the *oltra-montani*."

A slight contraction grew on her husband's brow. "To tell thee very truth, I know not," was his reply. "It may be but to save appearances with the court of Rome and that merciless bigot, Philip of Spain, his liege lord and our sovereign. It may be that he is compelled to wear an aspect of austerity against us, which his heart belies; for unless the man be a very monster of falsity, he bears us good-will, and is thoroughly alive to his own interests in having such tenants as the *Vaudois*. So put not on thyself the burden of to-morrow, Bianca mia, in addition to what our most blessed God has given us to carry to-day: he has promised strength for the day, dear one, but not strength for the morrow."

"Yet the child, the child, Francesco!" and all the disquiet of her heart was expressed in the passionate embrace which wrapped the boy for a mo-

ment ; “ we might bear persecution for ourselves—but for *him* ! ” Her eyes were full of tears.

“ Tut, tut, thou trembler ! ” said her husband. “ Doth not thy God love him even better than thou ? Canst thou not trust ? The grain of mustard-seed hath more faith than we who call ourselves Christians, and who profess to have a more enduring substance in heaven, and a city which hath foundations ! Dishonour not thy Saviour by such doubt, my little one. Perchance thou art conjuring up fears which are but phantoms. It is a very innocent thing after all, this citation. Paschali is sanguine of a favourable result : if they seek to put us down by controversy, no man is more able at the weapons of dialectic discourse than he.”

The pastor was walking forward, his head erect, with the usual fearless, martial air which he had drawn from nature and training ; perhaps a little pang at his heart as he was conscious of the pair behind him, happy even in this hour of fear that they could trust in one another. And wrenching his mind from that, as many a time he had to do, by reason of the enervation which attends useless wishings, Paschali grasped the truth of his position now, standing in the forefront of his four thousand

Vaudois, first to meet whatever storm was coming. His heroic soul rose to the height of his great calling to be an example in all things, not only by word and deed, but also by patience, to those among whom God had made him overseer ; and the thought of divine duty comforted him, as it does all strong souls.

When Bianca and the child had passed into the cottage, the men lingered a moment outside. The glory of the sunset had all but departed ; only a gold streak or two lined the edge of the great blue sea. And the bank of heavy cloud had stolen onward in its imperceptible march, threatening presently to swallow up even the gleam of past light. Amidst it, as they looked at its black folds, burst forth a sheet of pale lightning, wavering for an instant among abysses of the solid vapour, revealing a world of menacing heights and gulfs aloft in that cloud-land.

“I fear me a storm is gathering from the north,” observed Francesco, looking at his friend with a meaning. Paschali’s eyes were now fixed on the rapidly fading gleam in the west.

“The light is but overlaid, curtained—not extinguished,” was his remark. “God’s sun must run its appointed course, and no earth-born clouds

can permanently blot its glory. Amico mio, let us sing the forty-sixth of David's Psalms." And some of the sublime trust therein breathed entered into their souls :

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

"Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

Ere it was ended, Francesco felt his wife's cheek laid against his arm, and heard her clear voice mingling in the strain :

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Grand words and inspiring, even as we read them here, sitting safely in our protected English homes. But what were those thoughts of divine all-power and guardian care to men and women who thoroughly realized the need of it in the common affairs of life—who might to-morrow be dragged from their home to noisome dungeons by a relentless tyranny—who might end their career on the scaffold or by the sword of indiscriminate mas-

sacre? I tell you that the whole Bible was transfigured by such light of possible experience, and its truths were intensified so as we can scarce realize.

And for many an hour during that wild night of tempest did Bianca lie awake, listening and dreading. Through pauses of the blast she could hear the pastor's voice from his little chamber in the roof; she could distinguish no word, but judged from the earnest tone that it was prayer. And here lay the secret of Paschali's strength—in close, constant communion with his God. Like Luther, he wrestled mightily and prevailed.



CHAPTER XL.

THE FORERUNNER OF THE TEMPEST.

THUS, next morning, was Paschali fitted to be the animating soul of the body of Vaudois which obeyed the summons of their suzerain and journeyed toward Foscaldia before noontide.

All men of mark among the colonists were there. At their head walked Marco d'Asceglio, "the principal man," who had been deputed to obtain them a preacher from Geneva, and whose exertion had gained them Paschali. He and the pastor—like-minded in many ways—led the van of the party, though sometimes they dropped behind among the others, with cheering or strengthening words.

"I desire nothing better," said the zealous young pastor, "than an opportunity to preach Christ's glorious gospel to the marquis and his officers—the truth of God against any man's falsehood, ay, albeit he were a pope! Perchance the marquis may have Romish priests to argue down our faith; I hope so—I desire nothing better than a tilt at arms with the heaviest-armed doctor of them all!"

“But, my brother,” said D’Asceglio, “it is probable that our lord the marquis has been urged to this citation and apparent unfriendliness by the bigots’ outcry round him; he finds, perchance, that he will himself be suspected of heresy if he scowls not at us. This may be a monitory measure—a safeguard for us as well as for himself.”

“Let me only spread the truth of God, whether by life or by death,” rejoined the intrepid Paschali. “And thou, my brother,” quoth he to Francesco Altieri, whose heart was heavy enough as he thought of the precious ones at home in the vine-covered cottage, “be not mournful, as if the great God were dead, and no help could come from heaven. But I have a commission to give thee, should aught that men call evil befall me this day. Thou knowest how I have been preparing a new translation, in French and Italian, of the most blessed word of life, especially for our people, who comprehend either tongue. I would have thee take the papers in thy custody, and let them not perish, but prosper to the end I purposed in the undertaking. At Lyons, or at Geneva, thou mayest find a printer willing for the risk; which indeed I trust is small in days when Holy Scripture hath so many readers.”

Francesco could not help remarking that the chances of his escape, should an outburst of persecution come, were but small—wife and child were no aids to rapid and secret travelling. “And where, upon this earth, shall we find rest for the sole of our feet?” he added, somewhat bitterly. “Were I alone, I think I should not care to walk to the death for sake of the most blessed Christ; but, O my friend, thou knowest not the anguish of fearing for those dearer than life!”

“Nor know I the joy of possessing such,” returned Paschali, sadly. “But thou must pray for more faith, my brother; more of such faith as can subdue the world under our feet, can stop the mouths of lions, can quench the violence of fire, and out of weakness be made strong!”

But a deep yearning lay in those anxious hearts for rest, for some safety or assurance, such as we enjoy every day around us like the common air, so perpetual a blessing that we cease to recognize it or to be thankful for it. What would not the harassed Lutherans of Italy have given for a measure of our security, our tranquil certainty that “tomorrow shall be as this day,” so far as regards social safety and permission to serve God as we list! Let us not forget to enter this in the roll of

our thanksgivings to that heavenly Father who has set us a peaceable habitation, guarded by law and guaranteed by the strength of a mighty people.

The Marquis di Spinello met his vassals with a stern demeanour. They had exceeded the limits of their liberty—they had attacked the ruling Church by the mouths of their pastors with a license altogether to be condemned, and which the marquis would not permit in the districts of which he was suzerain. “Since your coming,” added the nobleman, addressing himself to Paschali, “there has been naught but confusion and uproar. You have drawn these *oltra-montani* from the peaceable ways of their forefathers, from the decent agreement with others in worship and manners of life, to a fancied rule of your own, to a rejection of every symbol of the true faith, and made them—I know not what—truly I know not what,” ended the marquis, plucking his moustache in sore perplexity.

“Most noble marquis,” began the young pastor, gently, “it is not that I have made them anything, but the Spirit of God, that divine flame which cometh down from heaven and giveth light to dead human hearts. And as touching the practices and

doctrines of that false religion which thou callest true, I am ready to join issue with any of your Excellency's chaplains or learned men, now, or at any future time, to prove them contrary to the tenour and spirit of Holy Scripture, which hath been appointed to us of God to be our lamp and guide."

"But I can permit no such controversies within my domains," declared the marquis, remembering the very emphatic pressure from the ecclesiastic powers in Naples which had caused him to convene this assembly of his chief tenants. "Ye must submit, ye must obey," he reiterated. "I can have no heresies in my domains. Ye must hold your peace, and be content to do as did your forefathers. Why can ye not let your children be baptized"—he had taken up a paper, apparently of charges against the Vaudois, and cast his eye along the items—"and assist at the celebration of mass, and keep the saints' days and fast days, and pay your dues regularly as heretofore? If ye will return to the old ways, there may yet be peace; and if not, I give warning that I cannot sacrifice myself to protect a set of obstinate, wrong-headed heretics."

A moment's silence among the Vaudois: they

looked at one another. All knew now wherefore they had been assembled, and what they had to expect in case of adherence to their faith.

“Yes, yes,” said the marquis, who looked on the slight pause as favourable to the success of his design—“yes, yes, good people, submit, obey, and there shall be no more about this. I will intercede for you;” and his Excellency smoothed back his short, peaked beard complacently. “Only obey, good people; nothing is easier.”

“Pardon us, most noble marquis,” said D’Asceglie, stepping forward a pace in front of his brethren: “nothing is more impossible. I speak for all, when I say that never will we give up our right to that blessed gospel which has brought us salvation; never will we enter the churches where Roman worship of saints and angels defiles God’s sanctuary. But we appeal to the conventions under which our forefathers settled on the lands of your Excellency’s ancestors—conventions, the latest of which is ratified by no less a person than Ferdinand of Arragon, King of Spain and Naples, and which not even Philip himself durst disregard. Your Excellency may recollect that under those deeds we were guaranteed perfect freedom of worship; we were permitted to govern ourselves in

civil matters by our own magistracy, as in spiritual matters by our own pastors; and we have done nothing to deserve the forfeiture of these privileges."

The marquis had listened with ill-restrained impatience, and now broke forth afresh: "I am neither theologian nor lawyer; I will have none of this. It comes to the one point—will you submit to the Church's authority or will you not?"

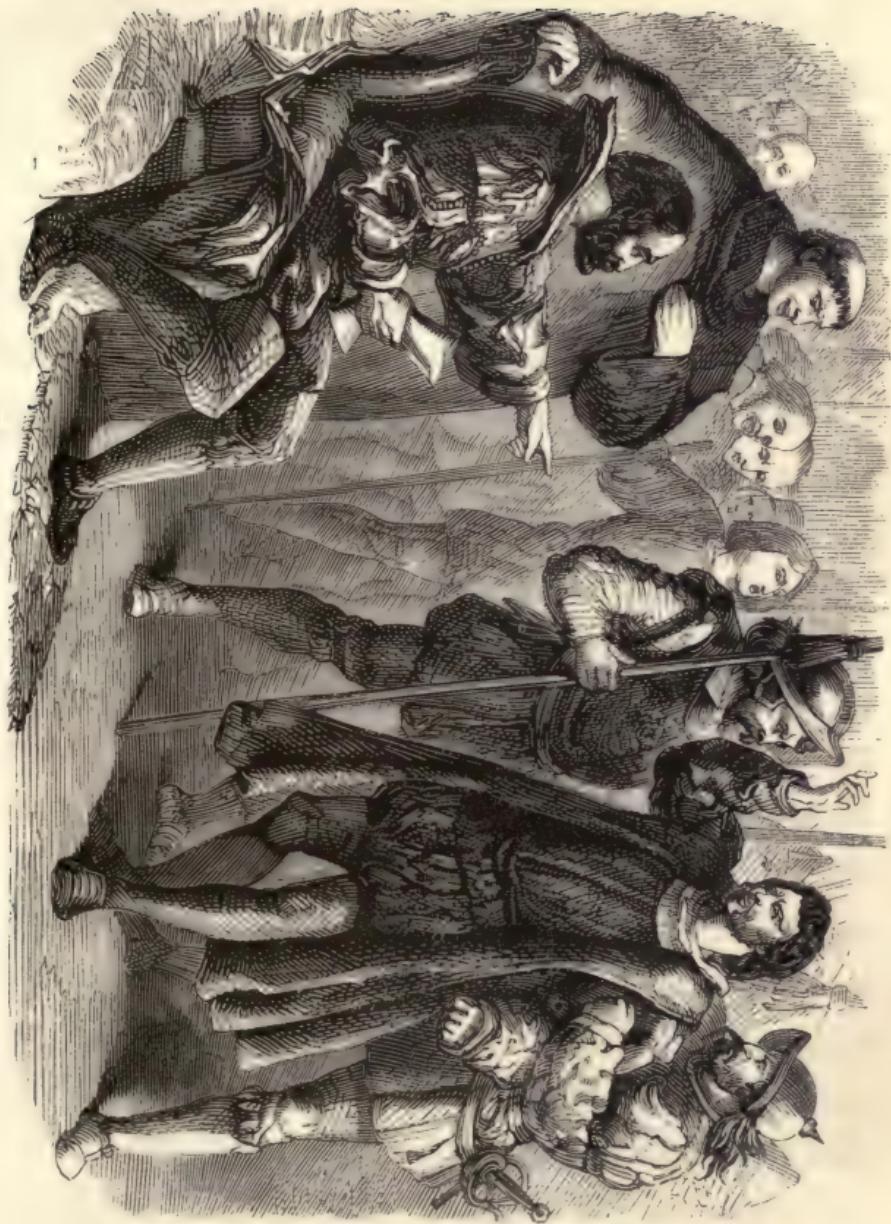
Then said Paschali, "We must obey God rather than men."

A murmur of approbation followed his words. The marquis started from his seat in a fury. "Away with him to the dungeons!" The guard of sbirri seized Paschali. "My lord, this is illegal—no charge has been laid against me."

"We will find charges enough!" said the marquis, vehemently. "It is enough that thou hast disturbed and perverted the people, making the province a very hotbed of heresy."

Paschali remembered one to whose charge was laid the like, and he held his peace. A priest at the marquis' elbow whispered him something.

"Ay, truly, this other man seems a pestilent fellow likewise; we had best have him in safe-keeping also. Arrest Marco d'Asceglie for being



“QUIT YOU LIKE MEN”

a ringleader of heresy and sedition, and have them both to the prison of the castle: there they may preach and pray so long as they list."

A dead silence fell upon the remaining Vaudois. A parting look was all the farewell of those dear brethren, but that Paschali said, "Quit you like men, be strong!" The marquis, chafing with vexation—for his sudden rage and the monk at his ear had committed him to a line of conduct which his sober judgment by no means approved—bit his moustaches petulantly, and growled like one of his own hounds:

"Ye see what ye have to expect. I'll have no heresy in my domains: I'll have none but good Catholics on my lands." Francesco thought he said this manifestly for the benefit of the monk beside him. "As to those old conventions to which yon fellow appealed but just now, his Holiness is not bound by one of them; his Holiness knows nothing about them. And King Philip knows that a ruler's obligation is to root out heresy." Here the evil-omened monk whispered again.

"Is one Stefano Negrino among you?" inquired his Excellency the mouthpiece. "My summons extended to him—did it not?" addressing the secretary, who answered in the affirmatively. But Ne-

grino was not present, and the design of the inquisitor was baffled for that time.

“I will have no heresies on my lands,” repeated the marquis, who took refuge in this tautology whenever he was at a loss for somewhat convincing to say. “So now go home, all of you ‘oltramontani,’ and reflect on what you’ve seen, and remember that I expect obedience and submission from you all as your suzerain and liege, and I command you to obey the holy Church and our Holy Father.” This oration concluded, his Excellency the not very fluent marquis rose from his seat in the great hall, and raising the tapestry at his left hand passed out of sight. The audience was ended.

Bianca waited long that evening for her husband’s return. The child was sleeping ; and again and again she went to the door to look out, seeing a most serene heaven lit with the great silver-shielded moon, which had eclipsed the stars in all her neighbourhood, as day eclipses them, by affluence of light. But for many a weary hour no echo of footstep satisfied the young wife’s ear. Her heart was sick before it came. Nor hers alone, but in fifty Vaudois cottages that night was the same anxious watch—the same yearning of

listening. What had been the result of that day's perilous interview? For that it was perilous, and a premonition of worse things coming, the instinct of affection too truly told those women-watchers.

At last—oh joy!—the step is heard, rapidly ascending toward the vine-clad cottage. Bianca flies to meet him. “What news? what has been done?” and many a thanksgiving for his safety interpolates his narrative.

“But where is the pastor Paschali? I deemed he was to have been home with thee.”

“He is in prison at Foscaldia. There! it were no use to conceal from thee what is the town-talk already. He and Marco d'Asceglie were arrested before the audience was over. The marchese was much chafed, and ordered it in a sudden wrath, but I daresay that before a few days they may be released.” Francesco said nothing of the spiritual power at the nobleman's elbow.

Bianca shuddered, clinging to her husband's arm. “God was very merciful that thou wert not taken,” she murmured. “But the evil days are come, and the curse of Cain is on this land—it contains no rest. Let us go away, Francesco.”

“Away, dear one?” he repeated. “Whither? Are not all other regions of Italy even more dan-

gerous than this? No; we will wait and see what God has in store for Calabria. Perchance this is but a passing gust of storm, which will blow over. The imprisonment of two is not the persecution of a nation; and however the marquis may swagger, he can scarce disregard the treaties under which the *oltra-montani* colonized here."

"But another power can, and will," interposed Bianca. "The Inquisition knows no law, human or divine. Let us go away, Francesco, if only for the child's sake."

"Dear one, thou rememberest not how the chief part of my small patrimony is sunk in this cottage and these fields: until I find a purchaser, at least, we must remain. It all comes to this, my wife: 'God is our refuge and strength.'"



CHAPTER XLI.

"PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS."

THE bright busy months of harvest and of vintage came, and passed over the valleys of Calabria. And during the earliest of them it was reported that the fiery old Caraffa, Pope Paul the Fourth, bigot and persecutor, had died. Rather good news for Protestants everywhere, but especially those within arm's reach in Italy, could they have hoped that the intolerant spirit of which he was the embodiment had died with him. Regularly every Thursday had the aged pontiff attended the Congregation of the Inquisition and urged forward the severest measures against heretics. Whatever other duty of his office was left undone, he never forgot this. His bigotry grew into a rampant rage against all who dared differ from him: the very cardinals and inquisitors themselves became objects of his suspicion. His last words were to commend the Inquisition to the care of the Conclave; and with the thought the old man, invigorated for a moment, strove to raise himself up to

speak further ; but strength there was none—he fell back and died.

Then the people arose, and their concentrated fury burst forth when the keen, lion-like eye that had so often awed them was dull and closed. They rushed upon the statue of the pope, and took a poor revenge for his tyrannies by breaking it in pieces and dragging the triple-crowned head through the mire of the streets. A worthier effort of their rage was the attacking and burning of the Inquisition buildings and destruction of the archives. The Dominican convent della Minerva, whose brethren were particularly active against heresy, narrowly escaped the same fate.

The echoes of these doings penetrated even to the Calabrian vintage-grounds, and waked some hope in Vaudois breasts. While crushing the purple grapes in the winepress or shaking the ripe chestnut boughs, these simple people would tell each other the exaggerated story how all Rome had arisen and cast out the Inquisition ; and who knows but it is the beginning of a Protestant movement ?—who knows but the dear pastors will soon be released from Foscalda dungeons, and liberty of faith be permitted once more ?

Others, less sanguine, thought it was a mere

momentary ebullition of feeling, perhaps of turbulent license, simply the reaction from a tyranny to an interregnum; and the Romans would presently accommodate their necks to the yoke as abjectly as ever, and yell around an *auto-da-fé* as savagely. So the issue proved.

Did any such news penetrate into the gloomy prisons of Foscalda, where the pastor and D'Asceglio lay immured? Did the long fair summer days wane into the shortest, and no tidings from the outside world reach these confessors of the faith? None but what their keepers chose to tell. How chafed the soldier-spirit of Paschali, which could better have borne the active torture than the passive endurance! What strifes for submission did he wage with the flesh and the devil—ay, and with their ally the world, for life was fair to him as to most young men, and his prospects might be bright enough if he would only give up his Saviour; but by the grace of God he received strength to conquer them all.

Round the evening fires that winter many a story crept out among the frightened flock—as dreadful slimy creatures crawl from the darkness of dungeons—concerning secret tortures of body and of mind borne by their beloved pastor and

their friend D'Asceglio. Many a brawny hand of herdsman and husbandman was clenched in impotent rage, while the women cowered in terror from the tale, and had afterward uneasy dreams. It was a time for searchings of heart, for much and mighty prayer among these Italian Vaudois. And the majority of them feared nothing so greatly as a possible desertion of the truth in the hour of nature's weakness. Even Bianca could not wish to purchase the safety of her husband at this price.

Yet between her and the sunshine loomed perpetually that awful shadow of what might be coming: had she not from childhood heard of sword and fire as the proper heritage of Lutherans? The dread embittered every sweet which God poured into her cup of life. It ought not to have been so, for Paul writes the injunction, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer make your requests known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts." Likewise a greater than Paul spoke: "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof. Take no thought for your life: . . . the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Bianca should have remembered and practically wrought out these blessed truths. The Almighty Father has given

power to many a weak woman so to do ; as in this very year 1560, in the Piedmontese town of Carignan, a wondrous heroism was witnessed by the angels and the inquisitors. A certain man named Mathurin was in prison for heresy, and before him lay the option of recantation or the fire. Easy words for me to write, and for you, my reader, to pronounce ; but just try for a moment to realize the dread alternative ! His wife obtained leave to speak with him for a few moments in presence of the commissioners, "for his good," as she phrased it, and they understood that after their own fashion ; and when she entered his cell she besought him to persevere in his confession of faith, and not to trouble himself about the agonies of his punishment, which could not last long, for that if it pleased God she would die with him at the same stake. Great was the fury of the inquisitors : they had made sure that her entreaties would have taken quite another turn ; and the utmost effort of their malignity could only compass that which most she desired—a joint entrance into heaven.

But if we are disposed to censure poor little Bianca for her want of faith and trust in the God whom she believed to be her Father, do we not commit the same sin oftentimes ourselves without

a tithe of the cause? Are we not anxious and troubled about many things which involve nothing at all so precious as the liberty and life of our best loved? Whoever has not thus offended let that rare individual pass judgment.

Francesco tried in vain to keep from her the intelligence which was whispered about in spring, blanching many a cheek and lip with fear. Stefano Negrino, the beloved missionary from the Alpine valleys, had been seized and tortured to death.

In February of the year the three martyrs had been removed from Foscaldà to the securer and more hopeless dungeons of the castle of Cosenza, where the secret efforts of the Marquis di Spinello to ward off persecution from them and to avert the zeal of the bishop, who was fain to attempt forced conversion, would be unavailing. It is probable that then the prisoners gave up hope and parted company with desire of life. Until the all-revealing judgment of the great day the savage secrets of Cosenza prison-house may not be known. What pressure of torture was applied to the poor body, while its unflinching mate the soul, agonized in every sensation, yet rose superior to the pain, clinging fast to the outstretched hand of Omnipo-

tence; what torture of temptation to the mind, arrays of promises and threatenings, if by any means such noted men might be warped from steadfastness, and their fall be as when a standard-bearer faileth—we have only vain records of these. It is certain that the many torturings of the gentle Stefano Negrino ended in the climax of death by hunger, and through this painful door he entered into the joy of his Lord.

And Marco d'Asceglie, the layman? had he like precious faith? Could he hold out bravely, though assaulted by rack and fagot? There was a pile built one April day in the courtyard of the castle, and his worn and emaciated form stood upon it to be burnt—"not accepting deliverance, that he might obtain a better resurrection."

Such heroic self-devotion is pitched more than a note too high for our social scale. Comfortable carpet Christians are the rule now-a-days; and we look back from our easy existence with a half incredulous marvelling at the grand old souls which counted not ease or life so dear as Christ. It is good to think ourselves back into that age of true heroes, and stimulate our sluggish hearts by such examples.

Paschali's hour was not yet come. A few days

after the burning of his friend D'Asceglie he was conducted to Naples, in company with twenty-two prisoners sentenced to the galleys. The man whose crime was preaching Christ chained hand to hand with banditti and murderers!

It was a long, weary journey on foot. Paschali's letters have left on record some of its painfulness. The Spaniard who had charge of the prisoners hated the heretic most of all: an assassin was less odious in his eyes. In addition to the chain which bound Paschali like the others, he put upon him "a pair of handcuffs so strait that they entered into the flesh." And when at night, after the day's march over rough roads and through noontide heats, the wretched prisoners reached the rude inn where a few hours' pause would be made, their bed was the hard earthen floor, without pillow or covering, while the very beasts had litter spread on which to rest. But if Paschali had the most luxurious couch, he could not sleep because of the torturing handcuffs eating into his flesh. He asked the Spaniard to remove them, and found that what would not be done for justice or mercy, might be accomplished by an adequate bribe. Alas! the heretic possessed but two ducats in the world; with these he must feed himself. So the hand-

cuffs remained on him nine nights and days, until he was finally lodged in the dungeon allotted to him at Naples—a most noisome cell, reeking with “damp and the putrid breath of prisoners.”

From all which, and from all possible torture and cruel death, he had it in his own power to save himself by one simple action, one falsehood: “Say that you recant—so shall life, enjoyment, honour be yours.” How often was this fair prospect held up before his weary eyes! How did human nature plead within the youthful heart! How did the face of his dearly loved, his betrothed, rise with irrepressible yearnings of memory, of hope, across the blank dungeon walls! Not alone to the Saviour of mankind on the mountain’s brow did the enemy whisper, “If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine.” Paschali heard the words, but he was given grace to turn away likewise from the tempter.

Ay, though he came at last in the guise of a beloved brother, who offered Paschali half his property if he would recant, and backed the entreaty with prayers and tears! It was harder to endure this than the cajolings and threats of a crowd of priests. But the Vaudois pastor stood fast by his faith. He was in nowise unwilling to

live; he loved ease and domestic enjoyments and quiet days as much as other men: the difference was that he loved his Saviour more.

Truly an obstinate heretic! So proclaimed all the monkish doctors, whose rhetoric was foiled by his firm faith. Had the Caraffa been pope he would long since have brought so perverse a Lutheran to Rome, and dealt with him in the court of the Castle of St. Angelo. But Pius the Fourth, of a jovial and worldly disposition, desired not the unenviable reputation of his predecessor for bigotry and blood-thirstiness. The Inquisition was not his pet institution, as it had been Paul's. Nay, Pius had been known even to censure the harshness of its proceedings, not as inhuman or unjust, but simply as impolitic; yet at the same time he declared that he would not interfere with the tribunal, for he was no theologian. The Congregation might continue to do whatever they deemed necessary for the extirpation of heresy, while his Holiness amused himself with architecture, gardening, *conversazioni*, diplomacy. Obscure Lutherans were no affair of his: if princes were infected, the supreme Pontiff might be called on to interfere. He wished, indeed, that all the world could quietly dwell in the fold of Rome, and be sheared or slain

meekly at the will of the chief shepherd. As for the outlaws who transgress limits, let the Holy Office do with them as seemeth good in its sight.

And presently the Holy Office thought fit to have Ludovico Paschali, the obstinate Vaudois heretic, who constantly asserted that the pope was Antichrist and his seat the apocalyptic Babylon, brought in chains to Rome on the 16th of May, 1560.



CHAPTER XLII.

THE RESOLVE OF SAN SESTO.

THE schoolmaster of San Sesto came home one afternoon in the same month of May, decidedly out of sorts. The playfulness or caresses of his children failed to extort a smile on his usually indulgent face; he ate of his favourite dish—a sort of rude omelet—and his wife knew that he was scarcee conscious of the nature of his food. Not so sensitive as Bianca, the good woman merely concluded that her “sposo” had heard some bad news abroad, which he would be sure to tell her by and by; and as to that intelligence being anything which could very deeply affect her, why, her whole world was contained within the four walls of her humble house; her husband and children were secure as yet; and it is a privilege possessed by such slow, short-sighted natures as the schoolmaster’s wife that the largeness of evil which a higher type of woman can in a moment anticipate, never strikes them until actually presented.

And so the good Cecca saw her husband’s

gloomy mood without a pang of that agonizing foreboding which would have rent Bianca's heart in like case. She stowed away the children in their crib early, from instinctive feeling that their frolic annoyed the father somehow; and returning found him sitting in the same spot, but with his head laid on his arms upon the uncleared table where they had supped.

“Amico mio, what aileth thee?”

Twice she repeated the little question ere reply came; then he raised his face to look at her large, placid, ox-like eyes, as he said, “There's evil news abroad, Cecca: evil visitors come to our town, from whom the Lord alone can deliver us.”

“Why, what have we done?” she asked.

“Done? Are we not Vaudois—are we not ‘oltra-montani?’ That were enough for a fiery death, my wife.”

“The good Lord will care for us, caro sposo,” was her quiet answer. “We ought not be afraid, under the protection of the good Lord. But who are the evil visitors of whom you speak?”

“Two Dominican monks, sent by the Cardinal Alexandrin, inquisitor-general, to suppress heresy in the Calabrias,” he answered. “They have convened a great meeting of the inhabitants of our

town for to-morrow, in the piazza, at noon, when, I suppose, we shall hear our fate."

"The good Lord will take care of us," repeated the placid woman; yet even she had pressed her hand on her breast for an instant when she heard the dreaded word, "inquisitor." And she went about her household duties steadily as usual, with nothing in her outward appearance to testify that a dull pain had been planted at her heart; the man's eyes following her, for this evening his dear books were neglected, and he was calculating consequences.

There he sat until his God raised him from that dreary mental occupation, and directed the troubled spirit to the fountain of comfort in his own word.

"Bring the 'Vangelo, the gospel-book, Cecca,'" he said to his wife. And therewith he roused from his desponding recumbent posture to find such words as these :

"Beati coloro che son perseguiti per cagione di giustizia: perciocchè il regno de' cielo è loro."— "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"The kingdom of the heavens is theirs." The poor schoolmaster felt immediately lifted to the

consciousness of the vastness of his life—the life which through his Saviour had been given to his regenerate soul. No enemy could take from him the eternal happiness which Jesus had purchased, and the existence of unknown joys which awaited him, whenever it should please his Father to call him from this mortal life. But—the little children ! With a great pang the thought of them came across his stout heart ; he grasped the book with a starting of the muscles in his hands—with a far firmer grasp than was needful, and which left the fingers white from pressure.

“ Cecca mia, listen to what our most blessed Christ said :

“ ‘ Voi sarete beati, quando gli uomini v’avranno vituperati, e perseguiti : e mentendo, avranno detto contr’ a voi ogni mala parola per cagion mia.’

“ ‘Tis just what they have done,” said the schoolmaster, leaving his finger under the line : “ they falsely have spoken evil words against us for Christ’s sake. The priests and monks assert that we commit the most odious crimes when we meet together to worship God ; and the calumny is revived stronger than ever of late, since the dear pastor Paschali’s preaching. But we are blessed when men revile and persecute us !”

He read and mused long over the 'Vangelo that night, and the strength which God's words give in the hour of need visited his soul like cordial. Yet the children's crib almost unmanned the father again. For those beloved little ones on the morrow—*what?* He remembered traditions, descended from the last generation, of fiendish persecutions in the valleys of Piedmont—of "mother and infant hurled down the rocks," of children held aloft on transfixing spears. Such images haunted his sleep when he did sleep through one or two feverish hours to dawn.

His was not the only restless head that night in San Sesto. The presence of those two ill-omened monks of St. Dominic had given the population of the town a nightmare. Longing for, and yet fearing, the light of the day which was to decide all, the worst would have been almost as bearable as the suspense.

Hundreds of eyes scanned those monks' inscrutable faces that forenoon in the piazza. The one, a portly, imperious-voiced man, whose coarse white woollen robe enveloped a massive figure; the other, dark, pale, lithe—but both with countenances impenetrable, at least to the hurried, anxious stare of the multitude who felt in their power.

Very gentle was the speech of the lithe monk, yet signifying much :

“ Most dear friends, the Fra Valerio and myself have been sent hither by his Eminence the Cardinal Alexandrin, of the Holy Congregation ; and we come in all love and good faith, not to hurt any person, but only to warn you, as deeply concerned for your prosperity and salvation, that you should desist from hearing any teachers of religion but those appointed by your ordinary the bishop. His Eminence has learned with sorrow that certain Lutherans have penetrated among you, and are seeking to undermine the foundations of your faith. Now if you dismiss these men, who have led you astray, and sought to draw you from the holy Roman Church into all manner of heresies, you shall do well. We are desirous to deal by you in love and peace ; therefore we invite all here present to the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the mass to-morrow morning, at the hour of matins, in the church of our Blessed Lady ; when we shall be enabled to distinguish the tares from the wheat and to act accordingly. And now we commend you to the guardianship of our Lady and the holy saints. *Benedicite.*”

The monk’s prayer was stifled in a chorus of

murmurs which arose from the crowd. But his brother Valerio stepped forward. In few and terse words he gave them to understand the alternative : recantation or loss of life and property. If they attended the mass, and comported themselves otherwise as good Catholics, no inquiry as to former conduct should endanger them; if they remained obstinate, they must expect the punishment of heretics.

“ And the convention—the convention ! ” The royally-ratified treaty, guaranteeing the rights of Vaudois settlers, was it so much waste paper ? Could no security be drawn from long usage, long possession, from generations gone by under feudatories who obeyed their own and their fathers’ promises and agreements sacredly ? Ah ! the Inquisition could ride roughshod over all. No power—civil, military, or ecclesiastical—could pretend to stay the hand of the terrible tribunal, or to ask it, “ What doest thou ? ”

So the Dominican monks knew that the turbulence of the crowd was but vapouring : they waited, calmly confident, till the morrow’s crisis. Brother Alfonso and Brother Valerio attended in the church of our Lady at the appointed hour : the bell rang for matins loud and long, the mass was

begun, the mass was ended. Where were the congregation? Fra Valerio swung his incense to comparatively empty benches; the handful of Roman Catholics in San Sesto attended—not one more.

The elder Dominican's black eyes gleamed dangerously. His office and his embassy despised by these "oltra-montani!" Contemptuous silence and disobedience their only answer to persuasions and threatenings! He would show them that he was not thus to be trifled with. He would send to the viceroy at Naples for troops, and compel these obstinate heretics to submit at sword's point.

But lo! when he came forth into the town, thus chafed, and lithe Brother Alfonso casting oil on the flame with his quiet words, the street was deserted. The house doors stood open into empty chambers. A great silence was everywhere. No clang of hammer or anvil, no ox-carts standing in the market-place, no busy stalls and shops, no voices of children at play in the shady loggias; the place was as one depopulated. What has become of the inhabitants?

"Verily," quoth Fra Alfonso, with his sinister smile, "had we brought with us the plague, we could not be more shunned by the good people

of San Sesto. Ecco ! there's an old man leaning on a staff. Follow and question him, my brother Giulio, that we may solve this mystery. Truly were the town all asleep or dead, 'twould scarcely be more silent."

The aged Vaudois was brought forward and interrogated. It took not many questions to draw from him the fact that the inhabitants of San Sesto had in a body left their homes, their trades, their property, and withdrawn to the shelter of the neighbouring woods.

Fra Valerio's countenance grew pale with rage.

"And wherefore, old dotard," he shouted, "have they thus done? Let them not think to escape the Holy Office; I will have troops from the viceroy—I will hunt them from their coverts."

"Ay, thou art a worthy successor of Saint Dominic the persecutor!" replied the old man, undauntedly—"he who massacred our forefathers in Provence, and lighted the piles of a thousand martyrs! Yes, strike me down if thou wilt; I have lived long enough—my greatest hope is death!"

"Have him away to the prison for insult to the representatives of the Holy Office!" ordered Fra Valerio, "and prepare a swift messenger to Na-

bles immediately. These heretics must be made an example of. We came in all peace and amity, willing them to be reconciled to the Church, and they have rejected mercy; nothing remains but justice."

"Yet I would suggest," said the younger monk, "that a bloodless victory would bring greater honour to our mission. I would try gentler measures a while. I know they deserve severe punishment; yet may not a premature drawing of the sword defeat our ends?"

The inquisitors held conference together for some moments in low tones. Fra Alfonso's crafty countenance indicated some deep-laid scheme of astute policy, to which the other monk gradually assented as his wrath cooled.

No more was heard of troops from the viceroy. In much milder mood Fra Valerio returned to his convent; whence shortly after, he and his brother-inquisitor emerged, mounted mules at a postern gate, and accompanied by the guard of sbirri, took the road to La Guardia, twelve miles away.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SAMSON'S CHASE.

ALONG through the beautiful Calabrian valleys passed the monkish cavalcade from San Sesto to La Guardia, a distance of perhaps twelve miles. Central in the party were the two inquisitors, bestriding their apostolic mules, albeit that to Fra Alfonso's lean form and fiery eye a war-charger would have seemed the more suitable beast. Not alone to the sword spiritual did these worthy sons of the Church trust. A goodly escort of soldiers and sbirri accompanied them, for there was no knowing what these "oltra-montani" might attempt in their desperation. And portly Fra Valerio entered no strip of woodland nor gloomy gorge of the hills without certain uneasy sensations and an irrational desire to spur his peaceful mule.

But they travelled without interruption till the broad blue sea lay stretched before them, and, like a cluster of shells on the shore, rose the gray-walled town of La Guardia at some distance. Straight toward the shimmering waters lay the

road, now through open country, smiling with the cultivation of fields and vineyards. Fra Valerio felt his valour wax strong again as he emerged from the perilous cincture of hills upon level lands, where white cottages lay scattered like sheep ready for slaughter.

Entering La Guardia, immediately the gates were shut and soldiers posted beside them. What hostile movement was this? The people flocked to the piazza, the centre of civic life, where, if anywhere, they would learn the meaning of this alarming demonstration. The smooth-tongued brother Alfonso adjusted his white robe gracefully, and uttered falsehoods without a blush on his pale olive cheek.

“ Dear and faithful friends,” he began, “ we shall be compelled, much to our regret, to condemn you to death if you do not follow the example of your brethren at San Sesto. They have renounced their errors and returned to the bosom of the holy Church with true contrition. They have assisted at the most blessed sacrifice of the mass, received the most holy eucharist, and thereupon a plenary absolution has been granted them. The like course is open to you. You may follow the example of their dutiful conduct, and thereby con-

sult your best interests and be partakers of their blessings. Be wise as they have been, most dear friends, for the Church hath yet open arms to receive the penitent, while she hath a sharp sword for the offending."

Now the people of La Guardia were simple folk, for the most part wholly unused to deceit and treachery. Had their brethren of San Sesto yielded? Then the sin could not be great of doing likewise. They had no time to deliberate: the bloody sword or the mass was offered; the decision must be immediate. Who would not be scared by the alternative? And as to questioning the truth of the inquisitor's plausible statement, their own native honesty disarmed them from suspicion.

So Fra Valerio and Fra Alfonso swung their censers, and performed their genuflexions, and adored their consecrated bread in presence of the population of La Guardia, who with unquiet consciences looked on and knelt when required, sullenly obedient and perplexed.

Truly a great victory for the monks! It never occurred to these worthy gentlemen that the deluded Vaudois might prove recalcitrant on discovering the trick played on them. But next day

there was a tumultuous gathering in the same market-place. The news of the steadfastness of San Sesto had reached their ears, filling them with shame and self-scorn. They would instantly leave their town with wives and children and go to join their brethren in the woods. The Marquis di Spinello, their feudatory superior, endeavoured to quell their excitement. He made the fairest promises and representations. He would use his influence with the viceroy that the San Sesto people should meet with no further persecution. Attendance at mass was a mere matter of form, which was valuable as securing them from the Inquisition. They would not draw fire and sword on themselves by an inconsiderate zeal! He who had imprisoned Paschali and D'Asceglio might seem a bad preacher of moderation. But it is a terrible thing by the heat of the moment to forfeit home and property, perhaps life. The very speech of the marquis, if only by its duration, helped to cool the audience. They hesitated from the boldness of their first resolve: they were prevailed on to wait the issue of events.

The ardent and youthful spirits among them were ill satisfied with such cautious conduct. Some went off to join the San Sestans in their

forest, in nowise anxious to avoid the hand-to-hand-combat which seemed there inevitable. For soon the news spread that the Marquis di Spinello had promised more than he could perform. Two companies of soldiers had already been despatched by the monks to pursue and exterminate the fugitive Vaudois.

Francesco Altieri was at supper with his wife and child in the vine-covered cottage before mentioned, when the door was burst open suddenly, and a very tall man appeared in the entry. Bianca grasped her husband's arm convulsively, until the stranger spoke in familiar tones.

“What, Samson!” said Francesco, half rising. “At this hour! News from La Guardia, my friend?”

“Ay, truly—shameful and sorrowful news,” answered the young man, coming forward and flinging his broad-leaved straw hat on the table. He narrated what has been told already in this chapter.

“And thou art away to the woods?” asked Altieri.

“Yes; whither I counsel thee and thine also to retreat,” replied the speaker, who for his colossal size and strength was surnamed by his acquaintances Samson. He rose from his seat. “I must

depart now, and endeavour during the dark hours to find our brethren's hiding-place. I came simply to warn thee, my friend, that soldiers are abroad, led by devils in the shape of monks. Thinkest thou that should a score of them come upon thy cottage, and know it inhabited by a Vaudois, either justice or mercy would save thee? Verily, nay, for their delight is treachery and blood."

He took the wide hat again in his hand :

" Fly with me. I know the passes of the woods and glens better than thou—"

" What this night?" said Bianca, fearfully.

" Nay," said her husband, " but we would do nothing rashly. We will ask God to guide us, ere we decide, *anima mia!* I thank thee, Samson, for coming with the news, dark and grievous though it be. If thou wilt stay till the morning—"

But Sansom would not. Through the moonless midnight he sped him along, by unfrequented paths, into the deepest recesses of the Apennines skirted with forest. Here were defiles where a few might hold an army at bay; and great fastnesses of rock, which required only victualling to make them tenable as towers; and patches of pestilent marsh, over whose quaking surface now crept the wavering *ignis fatuus*. When some dis-

tance into the depths of these solitudes, he began to feel a weariness stealing over him. He could stumble upon no trace of his exiled brethren anywhere : the hooting of the owl, the chirping of the cicala, were the only sound of living thing. He would lay him down and rest till dawn.

Accordingly he climbed to a shelf of rock a few yards from the rugged goat-path he had been pursuing among the crags, and was presently fast asleep on its hard surface. Samson was not used to much luxury of soft pillows or coverlets in his simple Vaudois life : his strength rested as dreamlessly on the rock as on feathers. But as the morning light was breaking over the mountains, a dream visited the sleeper. He heard the baying of hounds—he was pursued by them—he fled precipitately—his breath came quick—his limbs failed—their fangs were fastened in him ! Samson started up, cold drops on his brow. Little birds were singing morning songs in the boughs beneath. A stream was trickling in tiny cascade over the rock. But beyond and above these sounds came at intervals a distant baying of dogs : some hunters were abroad.

And Samson smiled at the terrors of his dream. He returned thanks to his God for the repose

which had refreshed him, and clambered down to the goatherd's path. The baying of hounds again! but considerably nearer. He paused a moment. That was no ordinary baying. He listened for a repetition; he recognized the deep mouth of the bloodhound.

Then the fiends had brought dogs to track the wretched Vaudois! But he had not a moment for indignation: flight was his only resource, and to endeavour to reach some inaccessible rock or to break the scent somehow. He bethought him of having heard that water would throw a hound off track: he sped through the trees to find the course of the little stream from whose tinkling cascade he had drank a few minutes previously. It lost itself in a marsh, as do most waters of the district. But central in the marsh was a rushy mere. Samson plunged through quagmire and slough and sedge, startling a flock of wild water-fowl, which rose with screams into the air, plunged into the stagnant lakelet, and gained the matted copse at the other side.

He had escaped. But many and many a fugitive in those woods could not escape. Many and many a man and woman were seized, dragged down, hardly delivered from the cruel teeth of the blood-

hounds into the crueller hands of the soldiery and inquisitors.

Thus opened the campaign against the Vaudois, by the use of an expedient so barbarous as to be unknown in civilized warfare. But there was no law or usage which might not be wrested in favour of persecuting Lutherans all over Italy at that date. No treatment was too savage for them. The story of the Calabrese Vaudois is written in blood—as miserable a story as ever historian penned. And details which we shudder only to hear were actually endured by men and women like ourselves, for no other offence than that they worshipped God as we do.

The game of hunter and hunted went on bravely in these woods for some days : the hunters, well-fed soldiers in the livery of his Spanish majesty, ruler of Naples likewise ; and the hunted, humble, unarmed “oltra-montani,” with their wives and little children. One might have thought that tameness in the quarry would blunt the edge of the hunter’s gratification. But desperation makes even the timid doe turn to bay. How many unobserved and unrecorded martyrdoms dyed the moss and fallen leaves of those Calabrian forests none knows but He who has kept a record of them all. The

woodland rang with the savage cry, “Amazzi ! amazzi !”—“Kill them ! kill them !” The inexplicable fierce thirst for slaying which forms the delirium of battle, and makes some natures of kin with the tiger, possessed the Neapolitan soldiers. Our saintly Dominican monks meanwhile kept their white vestments without sensible blood-spot, but how crimson-dyed was the sin of their souls ! Perhaps they mildly censured the vehemence of such proceedings, yet the population of a province would rather have cumbered the dungeons of the Inquisition. Their myrmidons might have remembered, however, that such is the tenderness of holy Church about shedding of blood that she favours the condemned with the stake instead of the sword.



CHAPTER XLIV.

ON "THE TOPS OF THE RAGGED ROCKS."

THREE men sat beside a watchfire built against a great gray crag on a mountain side. Large branches of cork trees fed the blaze, which sprang up merrily from time to time, licking the face of the rock affectionately and crackling with energy and cheeriness.

The features of the watchers reflected little more than the outside ruddiness of that buoyant flame. Surely that grave countenance, with more than one line of care on its youthful brow and a sorrowful droop in the curve of the lips, is not the face of our friend Francesco? If so, a few days' racking anxiety and danger have oldened him by years. Well might it be, for all that he holds dearer than life is staked upon this desperate cast—successful resistance by the unarmed to the armed. Bianca and her child are among the women in the central point of the Vaudois position, a wild glen higher up, whose sides have more than one cavern pierced therein. The man next Fran-

cesco has wife and babes also to think of; he is the schoolmaster of San Sesto. The tall figure of Samson paces to and fro as sentry at a little distance, on a spot commanding the only path at that side of the mountain.

They are rudely armed. Scythes and reaping-hooks, sharpened spades, a few rusty halberds and swords, a few rough pikes, hurriedly manufactured by the country smiths from any iron at hand, form the chief weapons among these poor Vaudois. They rely most on the ammunition of huge rocks, which they have gathered to certain exposed points, with intent to hurl down on the enemy. The goodness of their cause and the desperation of their circumstances are the grand armoury whence they gain nerve. A quality much needed, for they have heard a rumour that the Cardinal Alexandrin himself, the chief inquisitor, to whom was committed by his Holiness the conversion of Calabria, has arrived in their country from Naples, with fresh troops, temporal as well as spiritual; and further, that his Highness the viceroy is hastening after him, to bring all civil and military power to aid this Church's crusade.

No wonder that the three countenances round the watchfire were gloomy. Thinking, forecasting,

to men in their position, was a maddening process; yet every effort at conversation died away presently into silence.

“ My brothers, let us sing to the God of our salvation,” said the schoolmaster, raising himself. “ The Lord often hath sent good comfort on the wings of music and sweet words of praise. Christ is not dead, that he cannot hear or help: let us trust in him.” And his voice, clear and distinct though tremulous with emotion, raised the prayer:

“ La croce e’ l crocifisso
 Gia nel mio cor scolpito, -
 Ed io sia sempre affisso
 In gloria ov egli è ito ! ” *

“ ‘ Sta con Gesu, cuor mio,
 E lascia ogn’ uomo gridare !
 Questo è il tuo dolce Dio ! ” †

The words of trust and aspiration which had comforted Savonarola in many a troubled hour were soothing to these watchers. They were able

* We want the Cross and the crucified more deeply graven on our hearts. We want to realize that we have risen with him, and are ascended to his glory, with as great surety as if already there.

† My heart, remain with Jesus, and leave all men to wrangle: He is thy gentle God.

to join in full chorus with the last verse, which begins--

"Prendete tutti l'arme
Nemici d'ogni bene:
Che più non temo, e parme
Che dolci sian le pene."*

"Yet," said the schoolmaster, breaking the swell of music, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal! I would not use sword or spear against them: it is not lawful, as I before declared, for Christian men to defend themselves by bloodshedding. Ye see not with me, my brothers, nor can I expect that hot young hearts should; but the holiest of our forefathers in the valleys were of like opinion, that only in the last extremity should a Christian man fight—"

"And are we not now at the last extremity?" asked the third person in the group, a young armourer from La Guardia. "A fig for such timid policy! We are not bound to let ourselves be slaughtered like sheep by these ravening wolves, who thirst for the blood of the martyrs of Jesus!"

"Then they that take the sword shall perish

* Take therefore all your weapons, ye enemies of everything good! We fear you no longer; nay, rather, your enmity is welcome—your cruelties are sweet!

with the sword!" exclaimed the gentle-spirited schoolmaster. "Knowest thou not what the Lord said?—'If any man smite thee on the left cheek, turn to him the other also.' Such was the spirit of our most blessed Master; and shall we, his servants—"

"Methinks, good neighbour," said the young armourer, hotly, "thou deemest thyself discoursing to a knot of boys in thy school, or perchance women in thy meeting-room, and not men whose hearts are a-fire with countless wrongs. How dare these accursed inquisitors come into our country and make desolate a thousand homesteads at a blow? How dare they threaten to take away our lives by the cruellest of deaths; and not only ours, but the lives of harmless women and helpless children?"

"My brother," interposed the quiet voice of the elder man—and in its tones was a touch of heart-break—"have I not wife and children? Thou hast none. Would I not lie down and die for them? Ay, truly; so it saved them from suffering, dying were but a small matter. My brother, I speak as conscience guides me, concerning the fighting; not from vain chimera or from coward-ice," he added, humbly. The other was softened:

he grasped his hand and kissed it, in his impulsive Italian way.

"I was wrong, father—I was impetuous: forgive my wild words. But truly these are times that would madden the coolest judgment. How doth the Lord in heaven look on such iniquities and flash not forth his lightning?"

"Because he knoweth the end from the beginning," was the reply.

"It seems to me," said Francesco, who had been thoughtfully gazing at the burning brands, and from time to time replenishing the fuel, "that in making resistance to the inquisitors and their troops we shall only be discharging the duty of self-preservation; and further, that the guilt of blood will really lie upon the men who pursued us and forced us to draw the sword. Our just God knoweth that we fight not from wantonness nor foolhardiness, but simply to prevent the cruel slaying of those dear to us. I would that a further trial were made of negotiating: it seemeth to me impossible that all hearts in the king's troops are so steeled to mercy—"

"A better hope," observed the armourer, shrewdly, "lieth in the great strength of our position here, which must cost them many lives

or a long blockade to force. Bernardin Conto and myself walked round about the crags at sunset this night; wellnigh inaccessible in our eyrie: on but one side could any enemy, unless he had squirrels' feet, scale our defences."

"The strength of the hills is his also," murmured the schoolmaster. "And their defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given them—their waters shall be sure."

"But I would that further negotiation were tried," Francesco said, rising and moving apart to think over his idea. A few yards away, and he stood on the edge of a sheer precipice rising from dense woods. A whisper of numberless leaves came up to his ears as the night wind stirred among the matted boughs a hundred feet below. Far off, in an opening between dark hills, streaks of silver amid dappled pearl showed where the moon would rise presently. No sign of enemy in all the noiseless land could he see, but he had learned to be campaigner enough, during his service with the Duke of Ferrara's forces, to know that such non-appearance was deceitful. He had a suspicion that every break and copse concealed a foe—that the glens could in a moment glisten with hostile halberds. His spirit groaned to think of

the inequality of the strife: simplicity of peasants and artisans matched against all the arts and duplicities of war; rude weapons manufactured from husbandry implements to contend with the well-appointed soldiers of Spain.

Then before his memory arose an unequal contest between a Philistine giant and a shepherd's boy in Palestine long ago. "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God whom thou hast defied!"

Francesco looked back to the watchfire burning against the crag, and forcibly it reminded him of the emblem of the Vaudois Church, a lighted torch amid darkness, bearing for motto, "Lux lucet in tenebris."

"Thou wilt not suffer the spark of thy truth to be trampled into darkness, O Lord." And gradually the conviction strengthened upon him that however Christ's cause might for a while be crushed in this spot of Calabria—and Francesco had little hopes that matters could end otherwise—God's truth must run and be glorified over the whole earth, and prosper to the purpose for which he sent it.

Suddenly, from the very edge of the precipice,

a man slowly raised himself and whispered, “Hist!”

Francesco recoiled a pace. “Hist!” repeated the other, raising his hand as a warning sign; the new moonbeams fell full on his crouching figure. “I would speak with thee—alarm not thy guard, for I am unarmed, see!”

“And what dost thou want with me?” asked the young physician, half inclined to collar and drag him to the fire. Some faint memories were moved by the voice and the gesture, he could not tell what: his curiosity was roused.

“I have been seeking to speak with thee these three days past,” said the stranger, “for I would do thee a service in this perilous time for thee and thine. I would show thee the surest hiding-place in all the Apennines—”

“Come, my friend,” said Altieri, incredulously; “if thou’rt not able to give some better account of thyself than this, I must seize thee as a spy. Why shouldst thou seek to befriend me?”

“Because I remember the common prison of Locarno,” was the only answer. It set swimming in the young physician’s brain a variety of faces there seen. “And what of the common prison of Locarno?” he asked, in some slight bewilderment.

"A wounded brigand—" It all flashed on Francesco's memory in a moment. "But the wound is quite healed years ago, signor: thanks to thy bandaging, from that day 'twas better. And I made a vow to my patron saint, that could I meet the man to whom I did insult before he did me kindness, I would repay as I could—"

"Thanks, my friend. Where is the hiding-place thou speakest of?"

"Not far from here—a cavern; wife and child could shelter in it; it has been my lair for months when I wanted no man to know whence I came. It is in the face of a cliff, with trees across the mouth—a most secure hiding-place as ever bandits roosted in."

He was still at the old trade, this brigand, and had been one of a gang among the numerous gangs which infested the mountain-passes, and defied all the civic power of his Neapolitan majesty; but as they merely robbed travellers, and murdered them occasionally, the Church never bestirred herself against outlaws who regularly muttered prayers at every shrine they came across.

"And, signor, I have somewhat to tell thee of danger. A proclamation has been issued, as I am told, offering pardon to all of us—to all the ban-

ditti in Naples—if they will help to exterminate the heretics; and you ‘oltra-montani’ were never regularly hunted down till that were done, if it be done. The banditti know every pass and secret path in your mountains; they can guide troops to the securest lurking-places.”

Considerable alarm was wakened in Francesco’s mind by this intelligence. Such human blood-hounds were infinitely more dangerous than the trained sleuth-dogs which had been ranging the forests.

“And sayest thou that no man knows of this cavern?” said he, grasping at the hope of absolute secrecy for his dear Bianca and her little Cosmo. “Well, my watch ends at dawn; I may not leave my post till then.”

“Signor, I can wait;” and he rolled himself into a shadow of rocks and bushes, earthing himself so well that when Francesco returned to the place as the first rosy streaks painted the east, he could see no trace of him, until, with a low, hissing laugh, the robber crept from the thicket.

“I was sleeping, signor, but the step of a hare would rouse me. In half an hour hence you had been too late to see the cavern this morning; for

though the secretest place in all the Apennines when once you're in it, the entrance is about the most public;" and he chuckled through his black bristling beard. "The signorina will be quite safe there, amico mio: fear not."



CHAPTER XLV.

THE PARLEY, AND THE ASSAULT.

AS that morning's sun raised his round red disk above the edge of the world, and his light caught on the tops of the serrated crags, flinging long shadows behind and across the rifts and patches of table-rock where the fugitive Vaudois nested, he looked right into a deep ascending ravine stretching east and west, wherein men were busy throwing up an entrenchment. This was the one accessible point of the position, and the way by which it was known the troops would advance to the attack. All the simple engineering skill of the Vaudois was exerted to make the passage difficult. A barricade of trees was thrown across. Piles of stones were heaped along the tops of the precipices at each side, to be flung down on the invaders. And then, having done all in human power to prepare for defence, they committed their cause to their God.

Bareheaded knelt the mass of fugitives gilded by the early sunlight, as, one after another, the

leading men arose and prayed. What prayer was that! What a pressing to the foot of the divine throne! what a wrestling with divine strength! what a cleaving to the arm of Omnipotence! No lukewarm feelings, no half-hearted words there. Tears poured down many a firm face unused to such trickling. The tremendous issues involved in the approaching contest—the *all* at stake, and veriest weakness to protect what was most precious—little wonder that they had an agony of prayer, and could scarce be silent. Intense “Amens” burst from a hundred lips at each clause of a petition; and many, prostrate upon their faces, repeated again and again the prayer which had just left the lips of the spokesman with irrepressible moans of longing.

And while yet kneeling before their God, under his own canopy of heaven, a scout appeared upon the crags near by. A message was brought to the leading men. All knew what it meant ere the words went round that the troops were in sight, marching up the defile toward the entrenchment.

The well-armed, well-trained veteran soldiers, who had faced many a storm of battle, despised these puny Vaudois adversaries with their wretched scythe-blades and plough-coulters and rusty ances-

tral rapiers. Hitherto the contest had been nothing but a secure running down of game, as it were. They anticipated nothing more now, save perhaps such slight resistance as should add piquancy to the sport. But deeper they wound into the defile, and closer darkened the sides precipitously together: it was becoming an ugly-looking place to get entangled in. The captain called the peasant who acted as guide, and interrogated him. Was this the only avenue to the heretics' lair? Then they had more knowing heads among them than he fancied. Never mind: the conquest would be the completer; the wilderness had shut them in; none could escape: at one blow Calabria would lose all her heresy, and he, the captain, would be covered with immortal honour.

So the troops advanced until they came in sight of the barricade. It had been erected at the narrowest part of the pass, and the gulley in front was commanded by a double pile of rocks and of desperate men to hurl them down. A hesitation entered the captain's mind, though his apparent advance was sturdy as before. The place was ugly —there was no doubt of that. It could be made a Thermopylæ, but the gallant capitano d'infanteria had never heard of that celebrated pass, and

so did not institute comparisons. But the thought did flash into his military mind that here could a few resolute men stop an army ; yet it was so improbable that these untutored peasants and tradesmen would know how to organize a successful defence.

“Like their own wild goats,” reflected il capitano, “which look boldly at one from the brow of the precipice before starting off in flight.”

He took it as a symptom of the approaching flight when a man appeared on the nearest crag, waving some white cloth as a flag of truce.

“The varlets ! A proper answer would be to shoot him as he stands,” observed the leader to the officer next him. “Nevertheless, to gain time—for I believe not but there must be some safer access than this to their position, and if so, yon guide shall swing from the nearest cork tree—to gain time while we send to examine, shall we hear what the wretches have to say ?”

“Perhaps it is to negotiate a surrender,” remarked the other.

For a few moments such might be thought. The envoy was not one skilled in diplomatic arts, nor did he remember how thoroughly steeled to all merciful considerations were the men whom he

addressed, when he began by entreating them to have pity on the helpless woman and children, and not hunt down to death the unoffending. As well might he have pleaded with the mountain vulture to spare the lamb because it was helpless. Had the prey not been helpless, neither vulture nor trooper would dare swoop upon it.

“A truce to this folly,” called the captain. “Surrender thyself and thy fellows, and leave his Highness the viceroy to deal as he will with convicted rebels.”

“But we are no rebels, may it please your Excellency,” answered the Vaudois. “We only ask to enjoy our common rights as men. We only want our lives and our lands secured to us, as they have been by treaty from time immemorial. Our forefathers inhabited this country of Calabria for ages, and gave no person cause of complaint by their conduct—”

“Come, come,” said il capitano, impatiently; “we cannot listen to thy harangues all day. Will ye surrender, or not?”

“If your Excellency meaneth by ‘surrender’ our yielding ourselves and our little ones to the edge of the sword, such we will not do while God gives us strength to defend the weak,” proclaimed the

Vaudois spokesman, undauntedly. “But if our adversaries are resolved not to leave us in this land of Calabria any longer unless we basely renounce our faith, we trust that the king’s clemency will allow us to withdraw to some other country, where we can worship God as our consciences direct. We will go, by sea or by land, to any place which our superiors are pleased to appoint, and we will promise never to return.”

The captain would not listen to the proposition, which it had cost the poor Vaudois so much to make in good faith: he would not even report it to his superior officer, or suspend operations till a messenger could be sent to the viceroy. He knew the temper of his master too well, perhaps!

“And we will take no property with us; we will give up all but a bare support during the journey; thy soldiers shall not be balked of their plunder,” pleaded the flag of truce, with pitiable humility.

“There is no peace to be held with heretics,” was the captain’s answer. “If ye be reconciled to the Holy Church—”

“That is the one thing we cannot do, your Excellency knoweth; we can never forswear our faith. But should we be driven now to extremi-

ties, your Excellency perhaps can guess the strength that lieth in desperate men."

"What ho! do ye threaten? Sound the advance there, trumpeter! We shall teach these heretics a lesson."

And as the companies of half-mailed infantry marched forward, they caught a glimpse of a strange sight. Down upon their knees had fallen the Vaudois. To supplicate mercy from the relentless?—no; but to cry to the strong God for strength in this terrible hour. Entreaty had failed, effort at capitulation had failed, and they were thrown upon the last resource—hand and sword.

The infantry rushed on with shrill outcries and blasts of horns, drowning the momentary prayer. Their foremost files were almost at the barricade, when, thundering into their midst, plunged huge boulders from the precipices, crushing all they touched. Twenty picked men of the heretics dashed among them to take advantage of the confusion. A fearful hand-to-hand struggle succeeded, and all the while these unassailable enemies on the heights rolled great stones down, without aim, or need for it, prostrating some foe with every fragment of rock. The defile was choked with struggling soldiers; and the few who could

get away were glad to retreat from such inglorious destruction.

They could hear—as, abashed and confounded, a mere handful of the two companies of invaders gathered themselves out that fatal ravine—they could hear already rising from the hills the songs of thanksgiving with which the heretics celebrated their victory. Tears of joy were no rare tribute of gratitude that morning. The women, who had cowered in their glens and caverns during the strife, listening fearfully for every sound, or some on their knees, hiding their heads and smothering their ears from the terrible distant clamour, came forth to welcome their deliverers, husbands, sons, brothers, who had repulsed the foe. What meetings! what embraces! what happiness! too heartfelt for laughter, and nearer akin to weeping.

The success purchased at least a temporary respite. Our discomfited captain of infantry returned to his masters the monks with a very different tale from what they had expected momentarily to hear. Fra Valerio was considerably frightened. Though within a fortified castle, with portcullis down, he expected every hour to hear the battle-cry of the avenging Vaudois without. He wished himself well out of the cursed country.

He vowed all sorts of severest punishments on the heretics who had dared defend themselves. But Fra Alfonso's far-seeing eyes glittered with an unpleasant light. Never were the Vaudois so sure of extermination as now: they were not only heretics to holy Church, but rebels to the king. He sat down and wrote a letter to Naples, setting forth and magnifying the repulse of the royal troops. He sent this missive by a courier, and tranquilly awaited the result. Meanwhile Fra Valerio tried the cajoling system. He put forth papers full of brotherly kindness and charity. His roaring was gentle as the voice of a dove. He lamented pitifully over the deplorable constumacy of his dearly beloved sons, the Vaudois of Calabria. He invited them even yet to return to the open arms of their most affectionate mother the Church, who longed to pour forth her compassions upon these poor prodigals. Certain credulous people were found to believe him, and fell into the snare thus baited: they were quietly lodged in prison until such time as the inquisitors should be at leisure to look up their victims.

The discerning among the band of Vaudois on the mountains well knew that this lull was but the prelude to a terrible tempest. They spent the

pause wisely in trying to fortify and provision their retreat ; for they likewise knew that no mercy was to be had by submission, and that their sole chance of quarter lay in a desperate defence.



CHAPTER XLVI.

THE RUINED HOME.

TIT was one morning at this time, before the mists of night had cleared from the water-courses of the valleys, that Francesco Altieri approached his cottage home in company with the brigand who had so unexpectedly befriended him. He thought of bringing certain things from it to make less bare the cavern where Bianca and her child were to find refuge at the last extremity—some covering for the straw and boughs which had formed the robber's lair—some stores of food. They emerged from the dense cork woods, crossed the last strip of morass and entered cultivated lands. As the dawn-light increased, they saw the features of the country more plainly. The fields had a strange look. Green and flourishing a few days before, when Francesco paid his last visit to the vine-covered cottage, they seemed now trampled and torn up. Closer inspection showed that some destroyers had been there, ruining the crops of the year. The land was as if a whirlwind

had dashed across it, prostrating every plant and tree. The maize was lying in matted masses, the vines were rooted up, the mulberry trees were cut down. Even the brigand gnashed his great teeth together and muttered a curse on the savage soldiery.

“ ’Tis fit for Turks and Pagans ; ’tis no Christian warfare !” said he, little aware that a first principle of Mohammedan war-making is, that no tree useful to man, and no herb of the field yielding food, shall be destroyed by the soldiers of the Crescent. But in the sixteenth century the Turks were yet a chronic terror to Christendom, and everything particularly evil and brutal was laid to their charge. “ And here’s a farm-house smoking, burnt yesterday, I suppose ; perhaps the owners within it, for that would be a mere peccadiglio, and just anticipate the roasting they would get from their Excellencies the inquisitors. As well have it over sooner as later. I hope they haven’t laid hands on your pretty nest, signor.”

“ It is very unlikely that they have spared it,” was the reply, as Francesco tried to steel his heart for what he might see. Alas ! no white walls gleaming through green leaves met his view, when he came hurrying along to the first point of sight,

but a blackened ruin, from one corner of which a faint smoke curled up into the early light.

Yes, the pretty, peaceful homestead was utterly destroyed. Francesco gasped for breath as he gazed on the ruthless ruin. The walls of the little enclosure were beaten down, every plant rooted up, the vines cut off close to the earth, the fruit-trees wounded half across their trunks, so that already their tops were dying. The household furniture was all burnt; only charred sticks remained protruding from the crushed wreck of a roof, all a complete ruin.

“Come, come, signor, bear up!” said the brigand in his rough friendly way, when he saw the young physician bury his face in his hands with uncontrollable emotions. “The best part of the home is left you yet in the signorina and the little one. Thank the saints you were not all in it yester morn when this havoc was done, for they are folk who would only relish such a centre to their fire. Come to the spring, signor, and drink; ‘twill refresh you.”

But the spring was choked, the basin was filled up. “Like them,” exclaimed the brigand. “And these devils hunt us, who never thought of such wickedness in our lives. Ma coragio, signor!

You and I will see better days, may it please the blessed saints."

When poor Francesco came to himself, and could reflect on what were best to be done, which truly in this bewilderment were a hard matter, he gave a few of his remaining crowns to his companion, that he might buy in the nearest village some needful comforts for Bianca and the child. Off marched the brigand, and left Francesco alone in his ruined home.

Never more could it be a home, that was certain, for one might more easily construct house and garden from the wilderness than rebuild and replant what the destroyers had desolated. A surprising ingenuity of mischief had in an hour laid waste the industry of years. And something more than vines and fruit trees had been rooted up for Francesco: all the sweet associations of home, all the tendrils which human hearts wind about familiar objects, were torn asunder utterly.

Perhaps this ruin was a providential teaching as to his future course. He must turn his mind now to another wandering in search of a home; all hope connected with this one died out as he examined the smouldering wreck. He knew that since God had ceased speaking to men with audible

voice, he directs his servants by events, wherein is to be found the “promised guidance with the eye” for those who look at all things, great or small, as the expression of divine will.

Francesco began to resolve plans for escape from the country. His patrimony was buried in these blasted fields, but it must go. Was not “the life more than meat?” A vessel from the coast was the most feasible means of departure. Bianca and the child could travel in no other way. While yet cogitating, a step ascending the hill attracted his attention, and he recognized the peaked hat of the brigand with some surprise.

“Why, my friend, you must have flown,” he said, going to meet him: “you’ve surely not been to the town since?”

“I’ve been far enough,” was the dubious answer, as he lifted off the slouched hat to cool his brow. “I’ve been to Chigi’s masseria, and heard news enow for one day, I’ll warrant, and a fine opportunity of making my fortune into the bargain.”

“How—what mean you?”

“I’ve but to go across to Cosenza, and offer his Highness the viceroy my services to guide his troops to the Vaudois fastnesses—he presto, my fortune’s made.”

“What! has the viceroy come into Calabria?”

“Ay, has he, with a whole army, and has delivered up San Sesto already to fire and sword. And the proclamation to the banditti is really out at last—free pardon to everybody, no matter how bad, if he’ll only help against the heretics. You see it’s not near so unpardonable to murder a man as to refuse to go to mass, signor.”

His eye was caught by something moving on the plain far off. He pointed his finger: “Ecco! i soldati.”

His quick sight had recognized the uniform at such great distance. They were clustering about a masseria, or farm-house. “If we look long enough, we shall see smoke presently,” predicted the brigand. “They leave fire-marks after them like the evil one.” And so it was.

“The mountains will be overrun immediately,” he added, “by these banditti, who know every recess. Birds of the air could not escape. Take my advice, signor, and lodge la signora and her little one in the den I showed you. There’s no other safety for them.”

Francesco returned through the woods and marshes empty-handed and with a heavy heart.

He found his wife in some alarm at the threat-

ened illness of her little child, who lay on her knees in an unquiet sleep, his dark curls tossed back from a burning forehead. A slight infantine fever, the father thought. "Lay him aside, for a moment, dear Bianca, and come with me." She knew that she would not be asked to lay by her little Cosmo without urgent reason. The brigand opened his great smirched arms for the load, and she trusted him. Woman and babe can touch the roughest hearts, and Sanga was harder by trade than by nature.

She could read the troublous news in her husband's eyes even before he spoke. "Bene mio, some evil has befallen; yet not such as we cannot bear while we are left to one another, Francesco."

He told her in few words; and she bravely suppressed the pang of the destruction of their pleasant home, till he thought the misfortune much the lighter for the manner in which she bore it. "I am ready to do what you think fit, Francesco," when he suggested their withdrawal to the place of concealment offered by Sanga. "Yet, oh my husband, can we trust him so implicitly?"

"You have already trusted him with something far more precious than yourself, little heart," observed Francesco, smiling down to her face. "After

laying Cosmo in his arms, 'tis not for thee to talk of want of confidence!"

The mass of fugitives collected in the glen had melted away from various causes. Some were trying to steal out of the country by land or sea during the interim of quietness. Many had taken their families to securer retreats in the mountains, where they had collected some small store of provisions, and trusted to hide till the storm blew over. All thought of combined defence, which might have effected some compromise, was at an end ; the doomed people were scattered abroad—sheep without a shepherd.

A slaughter in detail commenced. The viceroy lay inactive with the chief body of his troops when he saw that his opportune proclamation to all free-booters, outlaws and criminals was likely to do the business of extermination quietly yet surely, and save him the trouble. Singly and in families, according as they were discovered, the Vaudois perished by the sword, while the *benevolent* inquisitors were shocked at the stories of wholesale assassination which they heard, and would have murder perpetrated more orthodoxy by dungeon, rack and fagot. Fra Valerio and Fra Alfonso, to

whose council was now added the chief inquisitor Panza, withdrew their merciful selves from the neighbourhood of the war. Military execution was too severe to find favour in their eyes, but the bloodiest rapier was mercy compared with their designs.

The whole district smoked with fires and streamed with slaughter. Those heretics who gave themselves up in despair were reserved for the after repast. The inquisitors published a decree full of soft promises, summoning the people of La Guardia to assemble before them. Our unwary Vaudois, slow to learn the fathomless duplicity of monkhood, gathered in the market-place of the town to the number of seventy. Soldiers immediately issued from all the avenues and buildings round and took them prisoners, chained them and led them to Montalto for safe-keeping. This was the last great haul made by mother Church. She had now sixteen hundred heretic wretches in her hands to be treated as she list; and cruel was her pleasure.

Sixteen hundred inoffensive, well-behaved men and women, concerning whose conduct no accusation could be brought—persons who are represented by the testimony even of foes to have been

noted for indefatigable industry, orderly conduct, good manners, social truth and happiness—sixteen hundred of such, doomed to suffering and to death, because of their faith in Christ as the only Saviour ! Never had the noble army of martyrs a nobler addition to its celestial ranks than day by day ascended from the torture-chambers, the reeking woods and bloodstained caverns of Calabria during that dreary autumn and winter of 1560.

The brigand Sanga would bring tidings of such things going on in the outer world to Altieri and his wife shut up in their hiding-place among the rocks. The man was strangely faithful to these helpless ones.

He sought remedies for the child's ailment, even at personal risk ; and thus, when Vaudois babes were perishing on all sides by sword and famine in ways too horrible for narration sometimes, Bianca saw nothing of these murders. Her husband was careful lest she should even hear revolting details. So in her ignorance she would murmur occasionally at the perpetual shutting up in the cave ; it was injuring the health of little Cosmo : he pined for full light and fresh air, like a flower transplanted from the mountain-side into a vault.

He would run, whenever he found himself free in the intervals of fever, toward the pale green twilight which entered at the opening through branches of underwood ; but outside was a precipice sheer for so many feet down that his mother hurried after him in terror ; and the disappointed little creature would lay his curly head on her knees and cry bitterly. Francesco could see that daily the bright eyes were growing dimmer, and the little cheek becoming paler and less round, the little pulse more feeble and fluttering ; and the apprehension slowly augmented into a certainty that the Good Shepherd was removing their darling gently from them to the green pastures and still waters of a fair world where there is no strife in which lambs are stifled. Yet he spoke not of this truth to the mother, lest in her wild grief she should chafe against the insurmountable. And how gentle was this dealing to the agonies of other Lutheran mothers in that black year !

One Glencoe in the history of England remains a foul stain for ever ; but in these Calabrian valleys and villages, Glencoe was repeated, fore-acted a hundred times with aggravation of treachery and cruelty. Scarce can our refined ears bear to hear what these noble confessors of the faith endured.

A Romish historian writes: "Some had their throats cut, others were sawn across the middle, others thrown from the top of a high cliff; all were cruelly put to death. It was strange to hear of their obstinacy; for while the father saw his son put to death, and the son his father, they not only showed no symptoms of grief, but said joyfully that they would be as the angels of God."



CHAPTER XLVII.

SIGN-POSTS OF THE TIMES.

ASCORCHING noontide lay upon all Calabria. Even the tops of the gray-green Apennines rose bare and sharp into the blue air, there being in the whole skies no cloud for them to transfix and hold charmed upon their summits. The brigand Sanga climbed a peak somewhat out of his pathway, and could see across the level land to the horizon of sea. How changed the prospect since a few weeks! The trail of the destroyer defaced all that was human. For white farm-houses were blackened heaps; for tilled fields, withered patches of blight; for vineyards and olive-yards, confused brown dead herbage and foliage. A blast had passed over the country—a blast more desolating than the sirocco, for man's malignity to man had guided it.

“And they were a peaceful, happy people,” mused Sanga, as he gazed. “They were mild, and sober, and faithful above most men. No crimes were heard of here but what were done against

them, not by them. Only for me, and such as me, the district had been spotless. See this very pair, the young leech and his wife, that are hiding in my den, how good are they! They talk of a forgiveness toward their worst enemies; and when I have marvelled that their country-people did not unite, and at least sell their lives as dearly as possible—nay, but revenge and bloodshed are forbidden by the most blessed Christ. Nay, but the signora would forgive even those who burned her pretty house to the ground! And how wondrously they die, these Vaudois! That gray-haired elder, whose body was smeared with sulphur and resin before he was committed to the fire yesterday, how bravely he endured it! What fiends these holy inquisitors are, to be sure!"

He turned to descend the peak on the other side. A few yards downward, and his attention was arrested by a growling proceeding from the rocks on his left. Picking his poniard from his belt, he advanced toward the noise, and found himself opposite the entrance to a cave which was partially concealed by a huge jutting boulder. Entering cautiously and sidelong, that he might not intercept the light, he saw some object, a man perhaps, lying on the ground, and a great dog standing

over him. The animal flew forward furiously, and then Sanga perceived that his fangs and mouth were bloody. He struck at him with the dagger, and the beast fled howling away out of the cave down the hill.

Just as he had died lay the corpse of the Vaudois—an aged man, as the white hair testified. Hand and arm were torn by the brute which had discovered the carrion; not indeed that much could be picked from the poor bones, for manifestly he had perished from starvation. And yet “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

“ Pah !” said the brigand with a shudder, “ but he has 'scaped the burnings and butcherings only by the same road, after all. I suppose there will be many lost this way by starvation in the caves. Poor souls ! the whole world is against them ; they'd best leave it as quickly as they can.”

He went out of the cave to reconnoitre, and returned presently. The mountain lakelet was near enough, as he imagined ; he partly drew, partly carried, the body to the precipitous edge and cast it into the deep dark water.

“ There ! 'tis the only burial I had for thee, poveretto ; 'tis better than that savage dog's maw,

at all events; and if thy soul's home is with the blessed God, what matters it? I wonder," and his eye glanced upward from its shaggy brow, "which are wrong—mother Church or thee? and without doubt these Vaudois lead rare lives."

A quarter of an hour afterward he turned into the narrow glen which was the covered way to his friends' retreat. Great boulders leaned their massive gray sides on emerald turf, and a rivulet ran from a sullen black tarn buried in precipices at the upper end. Now just at the commencement of the tarn one of these huge boulders rose abruptly; the robber mounted it by a path at the back. When he walked to the edge nearest the mural precipice, a space of nine or ten feet separated it from a narrow ledge, on which, somewhat farther, underwood had rooted. Sanga jumped the space with slight effort; a false step would have flung him into the water, producing a bath which would have troubled him no longer than the necessity for drying; but he made no such mistake. He went for a few yards along the ledge, which indeed was exceedingly narrow, and presently raising the trailing bushes, stooped into the cave.

"*Buon dià vosignoria,*" he said, seeing Francesco first in the dim twilight. "I bring good news

—o che bella nuovita! There's a ship on the coast."

But the absence of response to his salutation, the unusual stillness, checked his garrulous tongue from even "la bella nuovita." The father moved a pace aside, and then Sanga saw that little Cosmo, the cherished child, had died.

Bianca was tearless now. Her grief had exhausted itself in violence during the first hours of bereavement; when the little flower of her life had finally drooped its head, and breathed away the last sigh, "He has God's light and heaven's own air now, bene mio!" she said to her husband; that was the first glimpse of comfort. "I would not call him back to this cavern. No, he nestles in the arms of the beloved Jesus!"

But when the little clay treasure had to be laid in the hole dug in the earthen floor of the cave, and to be covered up from her sight for evermore, the moment was more bitter than mortal mother could bear. She flung herself passionately on the baby form which she had loved so intensely: she wreathed that icy coldness with arms which seemed as though they never would untwine.

"La signorina should thank the good God that he died without pain," observed the brigand,

standing by. “*I have seen infants writhing upon pike-points before their mothers’ eyes.*”

The words recalled her to self-control. “Let me lay him down myself,” she pleaded; “I have always folded him to sleep:” so, with her poor eyes streaming, she composed the little limbs and crossed the limp, dimpled hands, and placed a coverlet above: the father laid green leaves upon it before he gently turned in the earth. And thus was the little Cosmo hidden from the evil to come.

And, kneeling by the sacred spot, Francesco poured forth his soul in prayer to his God. How near seemed the heaven which that sweet babe had entered! how real the everlasting Arms which enfolded little children! The brigand, standing by, and crossing himself and kissing his relic at intervals, heard his own eternal weal pleaded for with the Most High fervently, as for a deeply desired request. What was the new life they wanted for him? Some of their mystic heresies, he thought; but they were very good people, notwithstanding; they lived like saints, whatever they believed.

“And now, signor,” quoth Sanga, by and by, “there’s no time to lose. The next fair wind and the felucca’s off to sea. And believe me, the death

of the child is not such a bad thing for you both—nay, signorina mia, look not so angrily, for I would have kept ‘il poverino’ living if I could—but you can escape so much more easily. ‘Il poverino’ would certainly have betrayed you. Now, it is only to assume some of the signor’s costume and travel as brothers. The master of the felucca expects my cousin and his wife; not but he has a shrewd notion of the truth; so I’d have you hold yourselves close and say little, and cut off your traces as soon as possible by disguising yourselves as I say.”

It was after sundown that they left the cavern, which had suddenly become a most precious place to poor Bianca. When Francesco took her hand to guide her across the rude plank (which connected the boulder with the ledge, and was then drawn back into the underwood by Sanga), he found clasped in it a bit of earth, a vestige of that beloved grave, caught up in the agony of parting. She hardly cared what fortune they might meet with, now that this great joy had died. Even the mightier love against which she leaned produced no warmth in her callous heart during the stun of bereavement. She heard her husband talking and Sanga talking, as one in a dream hears with half

comprehension. She knew that her hand was clasped in Francesco's, drawn within his arm closely; and he felt how very chill and pulseless it was, how dead to everything but the dear little one whom it never more might touch.

Sanga was talking of the state of the country. An awful sameness of suffering and of cruelty was in his narratives. Devastation of house and land, and simple murder with the sword, were the gentlest of the miseries he could tell.

“ You see, signor, our new inquisitor, Panza, has got into his head that all sorts of evil practices were carried on in the religious meetings of you ‘novatori :’ somebody told him the lie, I suppose, and he’s determined to get it proved somehow. So he puts everybody on the rack, right and left, to try whether he can wring out a confession. It didn’t do that he saw a man die before his eyes last week, actually torn to bits on the rack—pulled asunder, as one may say. There’s another precious instrument called a ‘hell,’ and he kept poor Verminello —do you recollect him, signor?—he kept him on it for eight hours after he had promised to go to mass, and yet he couldn’t make him say what he wanted. I suppose when he gave way in one point, and promised to attend mass and forswear

his religion, poor wretch—il poveraccio!—the inquisitors thought it only wanted stronger pressure to make him do anything they chose. But they were mistaken."

"He was a steadfast spirit, after all," observed Francesco. "'Twere a pity he marred his constancy by the first lapse."

"Well, signor, you have some right to speak, for you did not flinch from the rack in Locarno, as I have heard. But as to myself—" and he shrugged his shoulders incredulously—"I'd swear anything they chose to name after one turn of the screw. Stay—did you hear of Samson? No; how should you, who have been so shut up? He was hurled from a high tower the other day, and his bones all fractured on the pavement beneath. It didn't kill him. He was still breathing, crushed and mangled though he was, when his Highness the viceroy came by. 'What carrion is this?' quoth his Excellency. 'A heretic that will not die!' answered some attendant; whereupon his Highness kicked Samson's bleeding head, and ordered that the pigs should eat him!"

The woman, clinging to her husband's arm, here clasped it closer with a sudden cry. Not alone from horror at the recital of the barbarous death

of one whom she had known as a friend, but from a conviction of her own great blessing in the safety of that husband, and the guilt of repining at any will of God so long as he was left to her heart. “Pardon me, bene mio; I have seemed regardless of thee when the child was taken: in my impatience I have undervalued thee, my Francesco! Thou mightest have suffered as they have, but for the good God’s care.” He had to stop and soothe her. The revulsion of feeling was beneficial; she saw how much worse they might have had to bear than the falling asleep of an infant.

How those great agonies are borne I profess myself unable to imagine. God be thanked that such do not cross our quiet English life-paths! But no effort of realization could help us to know how Verminello lay eight hours, staunch to truth, on a torturing instrument so diabolical as to deserve the name of a “hell;” or how Samson endured to be devoured piecemeal by swine; or how Bernardin Conto, at about the same period, was covered with a coat of pitch and burned alive as a human torch in the market-place of Cosenza. For Conto had been going to an ordinary burning at the stake when his zealous executioner forced a crucifix into his hands; the martyr flung away the idolatrous

symbol, and Panza the inquisitor invented for him this new torment. Elders and schoolmasters of the Vaudois had the dismal pre-eminence of being coated with resin ere consumed; “in order,” writes Luigi d’Appiano, “that, being burned slowly, they might suffer the more in correction of their impiety.”

Through the blasted land our travellers proceeded, in gathering night, toward the shore. Afar on the sea the horizon line was broken by a dim gray peak, solid against the clearness of the west; faint smoke hung over that volcanic isle of Stromboli perpetually. When they reached a frequented district outside the woods and marshes which skirted the hills—or rather a district that had once been frequented, where happy homesteads and cultured fields had once flourished—Sanga walked on in front, and enjoined strict silence. At last they struck upon a public road. The robber paused.

“ ‘Tis fortunate if the wind do not veer,” he said, looking up to the winking stars, where a few clouds hung motionless across their faces. “ It has already dropped very low. The signorina should hasten as much as possible; we are a mile from the shore yet.”

Rapidly as they sped along, she could not help

observing that, at regular intervals on this high road, they passed certain posts sunk at the side, which appeared in the uncertain light to uphold some strange excrescences. "What are they, Francesco?" she asked, yet shuddering without known reason at the mysterious objects.

"Well, I did not think they'd do it," was the comment of Sanga, "though I heard it was threatened to set way-posts of Vaudois limbs for thirty-six miles through their country. I'd sooner the lady hadn't noticed it—what, has she fainted? And if the wind veers, that felucca is off, to a certainty! Che c'è da fâre—what is to be done now?"



CHAPTER XLVIII.

FIRE AND WATER.

THE felucca was running along in the gray morning light, leaving Stromboli far to the south-west under its canopy of smoke, and to the east the pretty Calabrian coast. Bianca lay on the little deck, and would not glance landward. "It is a cursed country," she said, "though it holds Cosmo's grave: I will look at God's pure sky and sea."

The sturdy rowers, bronzed, lithe sailors, standing at their vocation, and pushing their oars forward to help the latteen sails which pointed like pinions far above their heads, easily divined the truth about this hapless pair of refugees. But though each of the eight wore round his neck a relic more or less sacred, from a shaving of the toenail of Saint Peter to a thread of Saint Catherine of Siena's robe, they were no bigots, and felt not called upon to assist the Holy Office to more victims by informing. They only trusted that these "ultra-montani" would not bring them any

ill-luck in the shape of bad weather; and the skipper kept a sharp lookout to windward.

Nevertheless, and despite the heretic freight, they made Policastro without accident, and set their passengers ashore. The rest had somewhat recruited poor Bianca's strength toward the fatigue of land-journeyings. Here was effected the disguise of which Sanga had spoken, and which both now recognized to be the wisest plan for travelling. Here also Francesco learned, with dread, that orders had been despatched throughout Italy to all civic powers, to magistrates and sbirri, to bargemen and wagoners, to inn-keepers and toll-keepers, that they should arrest or cause to be arrested every passenger who could not produce a certificate of orthodoxy from his parish priests, with visas from other priests at every stage of his journey.

Proceeding northward by land seemed hopeless in this condition of things. An idea which had already struck him appeared more feasible, which was to cross the country to the Adriatic coast, and there find some felucca from port to port till they should reach Venice. His own and Bianca's nearest friends were in Venice and Ferrara.

It needs not to follow them step by step through their wearying pilgrimage. Danger and fear were

never absent from their path by land or sea. The feeling of perfect personal security, common to us as the air we breathe, was wholly unknown to the Italian Protestant of that age. Every stranger might be, and probably was, an enemy. Noah's dove had no more resting-place in the weltering world of deluge than could the Lutheran have among the fluctuating princedoms and republics of the peninsula. When, after infinite toils and risks, our poor pair reached Venice, it was only to find new dangers. From the Tyrol to Cape Spartivento there could henceforth be no spot in Italy tolerant of the Reformed opinions, no spot without the glaring eye of the Holy Office bent on it fiercely, if perchance some man dared assert that first freedom of humanity—the freedom of the soul.

Now there was a certain brother in the faith, Antonio Ricetto of Vicenza, formerly known to Francesco; and in his house in Venice the young physician and his wife obtained shelter and breathing-time for a short space. Whither to turn for permanent refuge they knew not as yet. The horizon was clouded everywhere. War desolated the Alpine valleys of Piedmont, where they had kin of blood and of faith. Far distant England, under

sagacious and strong-hearted Elizabeth, seemed the one earthly land of rest for Protestants.

Altieri and his friend sat in the window of a mansion in the sea-streeted city at eventide. A sheen of sunset lay along the silent canal below, broken here and there by shadowed bars of bridges. Occasionally a gondola glided by, and the stillness was disturbed by the sharp warning cry of the solitary boatman as he neared a corner. The two had been speaking of news but that day arrived from Rome—the news of further “acts of faith,” and of the death of the Calabrian pastor, Ludovico Paschali.

The record remains for us, written by his brother, who had offered him half his property if he would recant. “It was hideous to see him,” writes this zealous Catholic, “with his bare head, his hand and arms lacerated by cords. On advancing to embrace him, I sank to the ground. ‘My brother,’ he exclaimed, ‘if you are a Christian, why distress yourself thus? Do you not know that a leaf cannot fall to the ground without the will of God? Comfort yourself in Christ Jesus; for the present troubles are not to be compared with the glory to come.’”

And not many days before Francesco reached

Venice, a scaffold was built in the court of the Castle of St. Angelo; and all around it and its ghastly stake and pile of fagots, curved an amphitheatre of luxurious couches and richly adorned benches for the spectators of the tragedy. Chief figure among these was his Holiness Pope Pius the Fourth; a jovial, pleasant, affable prince to all but heretics, "fond of witty conversation, good cheer and merriment," yet presiding here, at the cruel execution of a blameless man! Around him crowds of cardinals, inquisitors, monks of all orders and garbs; an excited populace filling every remaining space where guards are not. And then forth comes the martyr, the young man bleached and wrinkled with captivity and tortures, who has been buried so deep beneath the Torre di Nona that his poor eyes scarce bear the daylight: with difficulty he drags himself along under a weight of chains; and see! the dull cords have cut his flesh to the bone, leaving red, raw wounds. How do the people gaze, and the guards, and the clergy, and the cardinals, even up to the sacred eyes of Pius himself, and seek for some symptom of fear in that frail form and worn face! But the gentleness of endurance and pardon is all they can read; and he ascends the scaffold with feeble step, though no-

wise reluctant. A short interval is allowed him to speak ; and he declares that for no crime has he come to die, but for confession of the pure faith of Jesus his Master ; that the pope is not the vicar of God on earth, but most plainly Antichrist—in everything the mortal enemy of the Lord.

Ho ! this fellow takes too much license. Pius moves uneasily in his gilded chair ; the chief inquisitor makes a secret signal to the executioner. But before the last act of the tragedy can be consummated, Paschali in a loud voice proclaimed :

“ I summon you to the bar of God ! I summon you to give account of your cruelties and heresies and superstitions with which you have defiled the Church of Christ ! I shall stand in his presence before another hour. I shall bear witness against you, pope, and cardinals, and monks !”

They could have gnashed their teeth with rage, those gloriously-arrayed dignitaries in purple and scarlet ; and who shall say how many deathbeds were haunted by that apparition of the pale martyr in chains at the black stake, charging the heads of the Church with their misdeeds ? His ashes were thrown into the Tiber ; and the cruel tidings travelled north to her who loved him best, the Genoese maiden, Camilla Guerina.

“Father,” said the noble boy of perhaps seven years who stood between the knees of Antonio Ricetto at the window where he talked with Altieri—“father, I wish those wicked men were burned themselves!” And the child’s dark eyes brimmed over with tears. “Father, will not God punish them? I—I wish I were a man, to have helped Paschali!”

Ricetto smoothed the dark hair under his hand and pushed it from the ingenuous brow. “He is happier now than if thou hadst saved him, dear heart of mine. He is with the most blessed Christ yonder.” The boy furtively dashed away his tears and smiled into his father’s face :

“Then it is good he died, mio padre?”

“Yes, Picciolo, for that was his birth-day into the endless life; and he glorified his God before men and angels.” Francesco had been looking at the child, and thinking that his Cosmo might have been thus had God spared him.

“Read, my friend,” said Ricetto, “that letter of Paschali’s to his people. Methinks I scarce could hear it too often. Now, little one, hearken to his own words about his departure.”

They were rather above the child’s comprehension, but gave him a general sort of idea that

Paschali had been well content to die. "I feel my joy increase every day," he wrote, "for I approach nearer to the hour in which I shall be offered as a sacrifice to the Lord Jesus Christ, my faithful Saviour; yea, so inexpressible is my gladness that I seem to myself to be free from captivity, and am prepared to die, not only once, but many thousand times for Christ, if that were possible." Such were some of the expressions in that parting letter from the martyr to his old flock.

Ricetto rose and brought away the boy in his arms. "I have left him with my wife and thine," quoth he to Francesco on return; "for the child is sensitive, and might be dreaming, perchance, of these horrors. Evil days hath he fallen on, il poveretto! Evil days for Lutherans' children."

"The persecution appears to rage less intensely here than elsewhere in Italy," remarked Francesco.

"Perchance so, in that we have as yet no lighted pyres in our piazzas," replied Ricetto. "But many a one is in close durance for the cause of Christ. There is Fra Baldo Lupetino, once provincial of the Franciscans, and an eminent preacher of God's word in both Italian and Sclavonic; he lies in a dungeon these many years, and not all the intercession of the German princes can get him out. And

Julio Guirlanda of the Trevisano, they threaten him constantly with death ; but the doge and senate will allow no burnings : they have invented another martyrdom."

" What ?"

" Suitable to Venice—drowning. The inquisitors object, because such death will not be at all so horrifying as the stake—so impressive to all good Christians, as they term it. I wonder, indeed, that they have not long since made away with Fra Baldo ; for his steadfastness does them grievous harm : he bears the most undaunted testimony to the blessed gospel."

" And how hast thou kept thyself safe, good friend ?"

" Perchance through a want of faithfulness," was the answer. " Not that I have ever denied my Master in word or in deed ; but methinks all true men will suffer persecution in such times as these."

Antonio Ricetto could not see over the lapse of five years coming, into a prison chamber where his future self stands, listening to an offer from the senate of life, liberty and property, provided he will conform to the worship of Rome ; or afterward, when his boy, now grown to twelve, falls at

his feet and beseeches him with tears and caresses not to die—not to leave him fatherless. Nor yet further, into a gloomy midnight, where a gondola has drawn up beside that prison and receives the victim, and shoots along canal after canal, and away from lighted houses to the lonely sea ; to where, beyond the Two Castles, another gondola waits, and a plank is laid between them, and the shackled prisoner, stones fastened to his feet, is placed upon it. What sayeth the prisoner ? Prayers to God for those who ignorantly put him to death ; praises of the Saviour whose heaven he shall presently enter ; and so the gondolas glide apart, and the martyr is cast into the deep, dark sea.

Thus did Antonio Ricetto depart this life and enter upon his eternal joy. The Fra Baldo Lupetino of whom he spoke lingered in prison for twenty years before like deliverance. Even his Holiness applied to the senate that he might be burned as a noted heresiarch, but the request was not acceded to, though renewed many times. The martyrology of Venice comprises noble names, but none of steadfast endurance than this monk.

Reader, are you weary of the roll of heroes ? Cruelties were committed upon God's servants in

that age of Italy, too foul and fiendish for our ears to hear or our hearts to conceive. The one hundredth part of the malice and the barbarity of the Roman Inquisition cannot be told ; nor every hundredth name among those whom it recruited into heaven's "noble army of martyrs."



CHAPTER XLIX.

ECLIPSE DEEPENS INTO NIGHT.

MOTHER and daughter were again clasped in each other's arms; Barbara di Montalto once more held her child to her heart and gazed into her eyes, and wept over her who had been given up for lost. In these days of rail and telegraph, when Moscow is nearer to London than was Naples to Rome during the sixteenth century, few partings or meetings of friends can be such as they were in those days of no correspondence. We receive letters from India and Australia as regularly as the month changes—letters which bring dear ones close in spirit. But then, mother and daughter separated, it might be by only a couple of hundred miles, and no blank barrier of empty space could stay intercourse more effectually than did that interval during disturbed times in Italy. Princes had couriers, commerce had pack-horses and galleys; but for private requirements of friendship among the masses of men there was no post, no courier.

They had a great deal to say each other then, these women. All the information that would have been distilled on paper in successive letters had they lived in our time, was condensed into one tide of talk. You may be sure that before and above all else was the little dead Cosmo spoken of, and the dark slight curl from his small head fingered and wept over and kissed lovingly. His winning ways and his smiles and his broken talk—the mother had worlds to say of these to the other mother's sympathizing ears; and her heart was relieved when she had poured it all forth.

The physician of the ducal household seemed much as usual. His wife did not say, even to his daughter, how far he had gone in the matter of conformity, for he regularly went to mass now, and conducted himself, in all respects, as an orthodox Catholic. Yet he said that this was merely for the sake of peace; that his opinions were unchanged; in which case he certainly took great pains to hide his light under a bushel. No man could get on in the world, he averred, who did not swim with the tide; he had not the temperament of a martyr, and his private beliefs were no matter to any one.

But he had never been able to induce his wife to follow his example. She read her Bible at home,

and visited a few obscure “novatori” in the lanes of the city, and held her faith pertinaciously. Di Montaldo was perpetually afraid that he would get into trouble on her account; and this bugbear made him unjust to her at times. Bianca heard not a word of it; her mother was one of those self-denying, reticent women who do not add to the burdens of others by a recital of their own, but bear what God has sent them in silence and submission. And their reward is, that the load becomes lighter and smaller by patient endurance, while what we contemplate and talk about increases.

Bianca was inquiring after her old friends. Few of the Reformed were left; they had emigrated or quietly settled into the courtly faith.

“And since that dear lady the duchess left, things look darker than ever for us,” said the Signora Barbara. “While she was here we felt that some protection could be had.”

“Tell me about it, mother. Why did the duchess leave her realm?”

“As I believe, the cause was her faith,” replied the physician’s wife. “She ‘revealed the state of her heart’ more openly than ever during Duke Ercole’s lifetime, and declared herself, if not abso-

lutely in words, yet in every deed, to be a Lutheran."

"But I thought that her son loved her greatly," said Bianca.

"My daughter, all considerations of affection yield to policy with princes, so far as I have ever seen," said the other lady. "The Duke Alfonso went to Rome last May to receive investiture of his fiefs from the Holy See; and it is said that the pope complained to him of the scandal which his mother's heresies were bringing on the house of Este. So, when the prince came home, he entreated of her to act as in his father's lifetime and attend the public worship of the Church. But neither his prayers nor the persuasions of various learned men, who thought to overcome her resolution by argument, could move her from her faith. At last the duke was driven to declare that she must either conduct herself as a Catholic or leave Ferrara. Her husband had left her the palace of Belriguardo and half its lands by his will for so long as she remained a good Catholic; of course his bequest was void now. And she chose to depart, even for ever, rather than act over again the old falsehood, which had once wrought such disgrace in the Church of God."

"She was always a most noble heart," observed Bianca. "And are not the people grieved at her absence? Her liberality was wondrous great."

"Yes, they are sorry for her, because she never was weary of aiding the necessitous by plenteous alms. It was a sad day when she departed from the city, where for more than thirty years she had been everybody's friend. We shall see her in heaven, Bianca mia."

"Ah, mother, it never was so real to me till my little flower died!"

With the Duchess Renée went out the gospel-light of Italy. No more patronage in high places for the word of God, but the utterest persecution for all who dared read or listen to it. Pius the Fourth could look all over the land with his shrewd, worldly eyes and behold naught but clouds of thick darkness rolling on every side, obscuring the whole spiritual firmament, as he would fain have it obscured; while the wax tapers of Rome and the lurid pyres of martyrs alone lit the evil gloom.

A few confessors of God's truth still remained, such as Barbara di Montalto, who would not bow the knee to Baal. Perhaps there were many more than we suspect; for had not the Lord seven

thousand worshippers in idolatrous Israel when Elijah the Tishbite believed himself the only one? But whatever was their number, in the night that overspread Italy henceforth they kept themselves close and quiet, and were thankful to be permitted to die peaceably in their beds.

Old Babylon was scarce a worse desolation than the once fertile and flourishing Vaudois valleys of Calabria, whose roads were dotted with quartered heretics, blackening under sun and moon. The policy inaugurated by Paul the Fourth had verily prospered and prevailed.

* * * * *

One bright evening in the summer of 1561, two persons were approaching the little town of La Torre, under the long shadow of the Castelluzzo. Before them lay the valley of Luserna, sentinelled by that wondrous obelisk whose top often catches clouds as they fleet by; and massive mountains, snow-crowned, yet robed in coats of many colours where they rested on the earth, encompassed it. A tinkle of bells was in the air, yet not the Ave Maria, which bowed every superstitious head in Italy just then, but simply the ringing of the cattle as they were driven home for the night from pasture.

“At last,” sighed Bianca, “this land looks like peace.”

“Little heart,” said her husband, “how well is it that not on outward things alone do we depend for peace! How well that God has given us of his celestial calm, which passeth all understanding!”

“Thou art right, my friend,” she answered, gently and with a falling tear; “God will pardon me for that murmur.”

Dearly had the Vaudois purchased whatever peace reigned in their valleys just now. Fifteen months of sore strife, many defeats and obstinate defences, had terminated in the treaty of Cavor, signed by Philip of Savoy, and ratifying to them a certain liberty of conscience. For they had repulsed the savage Count de la Trinitè in his attack on Pra del Torre; and he declared that in revenge he would ravage the whole country, destroying all the corn in the blade and the young vines; and while yet a serious illness held him back from fulfilment of his threat, the mountaineers sought and obtained the mediation of Philip of Savoy, who procured them a general pardon from their prince, Emanuel Philibert, and a promise of the impartial administration of justice in future. All fugitives

were to be permitted to return and enjoy their religion without molestation.

Common rights enough, such as we have every day, blessed be God ! without fighting for them ; but an inestimable boon to the Cottian Vaudois. And likewise intolerable to the head of the Romish Church : Pius the Fourth complained bitterly of this “pernicious example of tolerance”—this single gleam of illumination on the Western Alps, the extremest edge of his dark empire.

But no treaty of peace, no princely promises could give again the noble hearts sacrificed, the happy homes desolated in the strife. When Francesco Altieri and his wife came to settle in the valleys, vestiges of the late wars were everywhere apparent. Ruined chalets clung to the mountain sides ; the mills had been destroyed. Only gradually did the old people come back who had sought refuge in dens of the Upper Alps, and found their villages for the most part heaps of ruin ; and the neighbours—where were they ? Slain, or galley-slaves, or beggars.

Yet, “bating no jot of heart or hope,” the often-crushed Vaudois set about a reconstitution of their homes and society. Some small contribution of members came from the far-off Calabrian colonies,

stripped of everything, having passed through unnumbered dangers and disguises. An equality of poverty was theirs. For the first year there was scarce enough to eat. But had they not freedom to worship God? And this compensated for all beside.

Many years afterward, in a white chalet upon a mountain spur striking the Val d'Angrogna, lived the pastor and physician of the place: no native-born Vaudois, people said, and speaking their patois in a strongly Italian fashion, but much beloved and worthy of love. A grave man, as one who has seen and suffered above the common allotment, but the more qualified he to comfort and to strengthen others. The education of endurance had been his, by which God fits men for usefulness to their fellows.

And to Bianca was given a noonday of peace after a morning of cloud and storm. Although other children grew up around her knees, born to a fairer prospect of mortal life than her little Calabrian Cosmo, perhaps none was loved so intensely as that early lost one. His baby fingers had loosened her grasp of all earthly joys.

And whenever M. le Pasteur Altieri and his wife looked from their quiet mountain home east-

ward upon their own loved land of Italy, “behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish;” yea, it was driving daily into deeper darkness. Yet never have the Vaudois hill-tops lost the gleam of the glorious sun: and even now, three hundred years since the light of Truth was eclipsed in Italy, from the self-same Cottian Alps comes a kindling ray, already caught upon the palaces of Turin and the workshops of Florence, and perhaps destined to be reflected on the very Tiber itself, rolling beside the wreck of Inquisition prisons during decades to come.

NOTE.

The following extract from M'Crie's *History of the Reformation in Italy** is inserted in order to show how closely the actual facts have been adhered to in the foregoing tale. It narrates the incidents described in the earlier chapters:

“Perceiving that they could look for no favour from the deputies, who sternly refused them permission to remain till the rigour of winter was over, the Protestants made preparations for their departure, and sent Taddeo à Dunis before them to request an asylum at Zurich from the magistrates of that city. But they had still to suffer greater

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trials. Riverda, the Papal nuncio, following up his success in Switzerland, appeared at Locarno. Having obtained an audience of the deputies, and thanked them in the pope's name for the care they had testified for the Catholic faith, he requested, first, that they should require the Grison League to deliver up the fugitive Beccaria, that he might be punished for the daring crime which he had committed in corrupting the faith of his countrymen ; and, secondly, that they would not permit the Locarnese emigrants to carry along with them their property and children ; but that the former should be forfeited, and the latter retained and brought up in the faith of the Church of Rome. The deputies readily acceded to the first of these requests, but excused themselves from complying with the second, with which their instructions would not allow them to interfere. At the same time, they begged the nuncio to grant power to the priests of Locarno to receive such of the Protestants as might be induced to return into the bosom of the Church. This Riverda not only granted, but also offered his services, along with those of two Dominican doctors of theology, whom he had brought along with him for convincing the deluded heretics. But though he harassed the Protestants, by obliging them to listen to harangues delivered by the monks, and to wait on conferences with himself, he did not succeed in making a single convert.

“ Having heard of three ladies of great respectability, Catarina Rosalina, Lucia di Orello and Barbara di Montalto, who were zealous Protestants, the nuncio felt a strong inclination to hold a controversy with them ; but they parried his attacks with so much dexterity, and exposed the idola-

try and abuses of the Romish Church with such boldness and severity as at once to mortify and irritate his Eminence. Barbara di Montalto, the wife of the first physician of the place, having incurred his greatest resentment, he prevailed on the deputies to issue an order to apprehend her for blasphemies which she had uttered against the sacrifice of the mass. Her husband's house, which had been constructed as a place of defence during the violent feuds between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, was built on the Lago Maggiore, and had a concealed door, which it required the strength of six men to move, opening upon the water, where a boat was kept in waiting to carry off the inmates upon any sudden alarm. This door he had caused his servants to open at night, in consequence of an alarming dream, which led him to apprehend danger, not to his wife indeed, but to himself. Early next morning the officers of justice entered the house, and bursting into the apartment where the lady was in the act of dressing herself, presented a warrant from the deputies to convey her to prison. Rising up with great presence of mind, she begged them, with an air of feminine delicacy, to permit her to retire to an adjoining apartment, for the purpose of putting on some article of apparel. This being granted, she descended the stairs, and leaping into the boat, was rowed off in safety, before the eyes of her enemies, who were assembled in the court-room to receive her. Provoked at this disappointment, the nuncio and deputies wreaked their vengeance upon the husband of the lady, whom they stripped of his property. Not satisfied with this, they amerceed in a large sum two members of the Reformed Church who had re-

fused to have their children baptized after the popish forms.

“ But the severest punishment fell on a poor tradesman, named Nicolas, who belonged to the Reformed Church. He had been informed against, some time before, for using, in a conversation with some of his neighbours, certain expressions derogatory to the Virgin Mary, who had a celebrated chapel in the vicinity, called Madonna del Sasso ; and the prefect Reuchlin, with the view of silencing the clamours of the priests, had punished his imprudence by condemning him to an imprisonment of sixteen weeks. This poor man was now brought a second time to trial for that offence, and after being put to the torture, had sentence of death passed upon him, which was unrelentingly executed by order of the deputies, notwithstanding the intercession of the Roman Catholic citizens in his behalf.

“ The Protestants had fixed on the 3d of March, 1555, for setting out on their journey ; and so bitter had their life been for some time that, attached as they were to their native place, they looked forward to the day of their departure with joy. But before it arrived they received intelligence which damped their spirits. The government of Milan, yielding to the instigations of the priesthood, published an edict, commanding all their subjects not to entertain the exiles from Locarno on their journey, nor allow them to remain above three days in the Milanese territory, under the pain of death ; and imposing a fine on those who should afford them any assistance, or enter into conversation with them, especially on any matter connected with religion. Being thus precluded from taking the road which

led to the easiest passage across the Alps, they set out early on the morning of the day fixed, and after sailing to the northern point of the Lago Maggoire, passed the Helvetian bailiages, by the way of Bellinzone, and before night came on, reached Rogoreto, a town subject to the Grison League. Here the Alps, covered with snow and ice, presented a barrier which it was vain attempting to pass, and obliged them to take up their winter quarters amidst the inconveniences necessarily attending the residence of such a number of persons among strangers. After two months, the thaw having opened a passage for them, they proceeded to the Grisons, where they were welcomed by their brethren of the same faith. Being offered a permanent residence, with admission to the privileges of citizenship, nearly the half of their number took up their abode in that country; the remainder, amounting to a hundred and fourteen persons, went forward to Zurich, the inhabitants of which came out to meet them at their approach, and by the kind and fraternal reception which they gave them consoled and revived the hearts of the sad and weary exiles.”

THE END.

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